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The Untold Story

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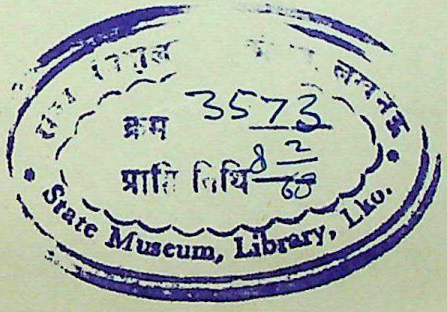
The Untold Story

LT GENERAL B. M. KAUL



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I dedicate this book to my wife
DHANRAJ KISHORI *and to my daughters*
ANURADHA *and* CHITRALEKHA

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Preface

DESTINY is not always kind. Many great statesmen, soldiers and saints have been its victims and their worth ridiculed. Though I have no pretensions to greatness, I have also been through a similar experience and, like some of them, am writing an account of my life to portray in what background and under what influences I have grown up and what part I have played in the service of my country.

Much has been said to my discredit and about certain situations publicly in the last few years whereas I have remained unheard. A balanced evaluation has, therefore, not resulted. This book, I hope, will enable the reader to see to what extent I—or others—are answerable for some happenings.

During the pre-Independence period, there were two types of officers in the army: a few who supported our struggle for freedom and the many who were either hostile or apathetic to this upsurge. The latter, to keep themselves well in with the British, derided my nationalistic outlook and my admiration for Nehru and our other great leaders. These staunch supporters of the British Raj, when India became independent in 1947, felt greatly

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embarrassed but being worshippers of the rising sun, they dexterously switched their loyalties, overnight, to the new leaders of India at whom they had scoffed not long ago. They had, all the same, an uneasy conscience due to their role in the British times and felt unsafe in Free India. They, therefore, did not look without dismay, upon the access given to me by many of our national leaders, specially Nehru, after they came into power. I suppose they did so perhaps because I had identified myself with them during difficult and fateful days (whereas these turn-coats had kept away from them) and also because they must have had enough reasons to seek my occasional advice. This situation was not of my making but was the result of historical circumstances. I became an anathema to these men, specially as I progressed in life, who, due to jealousy, embarked upon a wide-spread campaign of gossip, whispering, and vilification against me on every possible occasion among their influential friends in the cross-section of our society all over India and even abroad. They exploited many situations towards this end and were, by their systematic and sustained efforts, largely successful in creating a feeling in many quarters as if I was going up in life through 'political' influence, without merit and the requisite qualifications.

I was selected for positions of responsibility, from time to time, only after due application by Government of the prescribed yardsticks for such selections both in the pre- and post-Independence eras. At no stage was any relaxation of qualifications or experience made in my favour. I got many opportunities at various stages of my career to serve under some exceptional personalities and amidst notable events. During this period I went through many interesting and hazardous situations which brought me into some lime-light. As is usual in human affairs and in such situations, I aroused the wrath of my rivals who did all they could to denigrate me. Though I was not allowed

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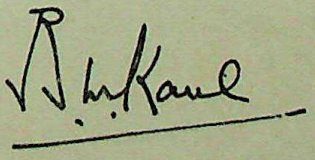
by Government to defend myself publicly, when I was being fiercely denounced in certain circles from time to time, Nehru took up the cudgels on my behalf more than once in Parliament and whilst addressing some press conferences. It was however said by my critics that Nehru was only covering me up. I tolerated this iniquity for quite some time but a stage was reached when I decided, as I have narrated in the book, to give up my military career prematurely.

Even after I retired from service, my detractors continued their vendetta against me. I then wrote to Nehru from whom I received the following reply on 28 September 1963:

> I have just received your letter of the 26th September. I quite understand your feelings in the matter and I agree with you that at a suitable opportunity you should clear up the misunderstandings that might exist about you. You must realise that at the present moment the attack is not so much on you, but much more so on V. K. Krishna Menon and to some extent on me. It is after all I that come in the way of many people's wishes and ambitions. You and Krishna Menon are utilised to attack me. We shall try to deal with this matter as seems to me proper. When the suitable time comes, you can put some facts as you think necessary before the public. It seems to me that in the present mood, any such statement by you would not be of much help.

In deference to Nehru's advice, I have said nothing publicly until now. But as I continue being maligned, even after Nehru's death, I think suitable time *has* come for me to put certain facts before the public. I have taken three years to write this book in which I have discussed many men and matters frankly. Some facts I have stated here may be unpalatable. But truth must be told.



Delhi Cantonment
1 January 1967

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(between pages 256 and 257)

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The Prelude

The Sad Vicissitude of Life.

STERNE

IT WAS my seventh birthday. After appropriate rites and feeding the poor, I was given new, shining clothes to wear and many lovely presents. In short, much fuss was made of me on this exciting annual event which I wished came more frequently.

A few weeks later, I had gone to bed rather early on a dark and dreary night. When I woke up with a start, it was already broad day light. Lightning and thunder were in the air and it was raining in torrents. Trees swayed in a howling monsoon wind. As I lay in bed, half awake, musing over the fun I had had, not long ago, on my birthday, father burst in the room and told me my mother was dead. It took me sometime to grasp the meaning of what he said. Then I broke down and wept bitterly.

Mother was twenty-five and had died of cholera without any medical aid as there was no doctor or hospital where we lived—a village, near Jhang, now in Pakistan. This was the first death I had seen.

It is customary to have a horoscope cast by astrologers for each Hindu child. Now that I had brought ill luck in the family, grandmother had my fortune interpreted afresh.

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It was reiterated that I was born on an auspicious day, the Budha's birthday, under lucky stars and a bright future lay ahead of me.

Father was in his thirties. He ran an austere household where his word was law. He was a teetotaller and of Spartan habits. I was made to get up at the crack of dawn each day and have cold baths in summer and winter, early meals and to bed by seven at night.

Father married again two years later. I liked my new mother. We were now in Tarn Taran, a small town near Amritsar. Father was an irrigation engineer and was frequently transferred from place to place. In the process, I attended many schools. He sent me to a Christian, Muslim, Sikh and a Hindu institution in turn, over a number of years, believing that a child must grow up knowing and respecting all religions alike. He explained to me that the exponent of each faith believed that only he could truly interpret the word of God and all others saw but partial truth. Father emphasized that God was one and all religions led to Him. But, he said, no one had yet defined God precisely. He was given different names and shapes. Some gave Him human and others weird forms. There were still others who said He was a force or a power which was indestructible, everlasting, all-powerful and which controlled life and death. Life had taught us to worship God through whose vitality we drew our breath, who kept our heart beating and the earth spinning on its axis.

Father added that from times immemorial and long before the dawn of the Christian era, man had worshipped the sun as God. In all Universe the sun was the brightest and the most powerful object we could see or imagine. It instilled life into men and plants alike and also took it away from them. It was the supreme celestial body whom all religions respected. They prayed facing towards it and treated it as sacred. The earliest Aryans worshipped it thousands of years ago. The Hindu and the Japanese Kings

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traced their origin from it. Would Sun be God, he asked?

Each morning, before I went to school, I watched Father Guilford drive past our house in a gig. He was a British medical missionary, about eighty years old, who had dedicated his best years to alleviating the distress of lepers who were withering away in this fearful disease. He chose a rigorous life of renunciation and austerity, bringing solace and comfort to many wretched creatures—in the agony of their ailment. He had made numerous sacrifices over a long period by which his virtues had become a byword in the locality.

One day Guilford took me home and gave me an engaging discourse on the significance of prayer and the need of thanking the Lord for His countless mercies in our daily life. After dinner, we both prayed, a Hindu child kneeling and bent before God, together with a Christian curate.

The next day I went to see how Guilford worked. There he stood, with kindly eyes and a gracious countenance, by his dispensary, along with his Indian companion, Doctor Das, located in an old dilapidated building. Not far from him was a line of patients, standing in bitter cold, in tattered clothes, some with half their toes and fingers gone and with bandaged feet. The whole place stank of their disease. The missionary doctor attended to the wounds of those patients with tender care. It was a moving sight of dedicated and selfless service.

From here I went to the main mission compound. This was where some patients were admitted, given clean clothes and beds and shown personal attention and sympathy, perhaps for the first time in their lives. Guilford watched them every morning, falling in for their prayers, which they sang out of tune and with faltering gusto. What great hope did these miserable souls hold of recovery and yet what little prospect there really was for them.

I visited this leper asylum more than once while I was at Tarn Taran. For the first time I came face to face with the

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misery of others and went through a comforting and inspiring experience. I saw Christianity working in silent dignity.

My sister, Dulari, was a beautiful girl. She doted over me and I adored her. Father had many rules in the house and was a hard taskmaster. For instance, I had to be back home by dusk each day. I had slipped up on this twice and he had given me stern warnings. One evening when I came late again he proceeded to give me a thrashing which I will never forget. But what I remember more is the way Dulari tried to shield me from father's blows. She won my everlasting gratitude through this gesture.

I was at home in the evenings after games well before dusk, now that I had learnt my lesson. But many months later, owing to some festivities in the school, one day I was late again. In panic, I related my predicament to Angad, a Sikh classmate. He precociously assured me that if I mugged up and recited the first stanza of *Jap Ji Saheb* (morning prayer of Sikhs), no harm could come to me. I blinked at this assurance but, in desperation, did what I was told. It took me the best part of thirty minutes to learn *Ek Onkar Sat Nam...Karta Purakh...* (By the grace of Almighty God... of glory eternal...). And with great fervour, I recited these verses repeatedly, whilst I hastened towards home. As I tip-toed into my house, I met our old servant, who told me, to my utter amazement, that father had been suddenly called away, about an hour ago, on urgent official work, and so was not there to take me to task for coming late. Angad proved to be right. The recital of his prayers had worked, after all. My veneration for the Sikh religion took birth that day.

Dulari was married to a prosperous young man. Unfortunately, they never clicked from the first day and had constant discord. She first suffered in silence but continued mental anguish began to tell on her delicate frame. In desperation, she hastily scribbled a few lines to father one day, saying, in effect, that if he wanted to see her alive, he

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should come as soon as he received her letter. This came to him as a bolt from the blue. He was taken aback, when he saw the apple of his eye looking a shadow of her former self, with sadness writ large on her face. She was burning in fever at the time. Father decided that there was no question of her continuing to live where she was and that she should come home with him at once.

Dulari was thoroughly checked up medically, as soon as she reached home, and was diagnosed as suffering from tuberculosis of both lungs in an advanced stage. Father left no stone unturned and consulted specialists all over India in a desperate attempt to save her from the ravages of this disease. But it was a hopeless affair. The ailment had taken deep roots and, what is worse, Dulari had no will to live. She began sinking slowly and despite all father did, she died. Her death darkened our lives for months. We seemed to be under an evil star.

Nimmi lived with her parents next door to us in Amritsar. She was about my age—fourteen—and a fine little girl. We had more than a childish fancy for each other. On every Saturday night, father would ask both of us to come over to his study and tell us all about history and current affairs. On this particular occasion, we both sat glued together, whilst he gave us a graphic account of the massacre which the British had perpetrated in the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in 1919. Referring to the dismal affair, father reminded us of what Abraham Lincoln had said once: 'No nation was good enough to rule another nation.' He said there was no country which had not the right of freeing itself from oppression. He then traced the history of the British Raj in India and said: here was a power whose people, on the one hand, said with pride 'We shall never be slaves' and, on the other hand, had enslaved India without a blush. He ended up by saying that however fairly told,

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there was much for the English to be ashamed of during their rule in India. These accounts stirred in me patriotic fervour for the first time.

A few days later father was moved away from Amritsar and I said goodbye to Nimmi in blinding tears.

Father had many dictums. He permitted no arguments. One could never answer him back. No excuses were ever entertained. Theatre, cinema, and music were taboo. Gaudy clothes were forbidden. According to him, so far as reading was concerned, it was to be confined to text-books and nothing else. Exercise meant only riding for long distances. He taught me riding when I was ten by dumping me on a horse and expecting me to carry on. I had many falls but eventually learnt through the hard way. If I was ever injured in a fall, however seriously, he would compel me to ride again at once, without any fuss. He taught me swimming by throwing me into a small canal and expecting that I swam across by the will to survive, as he stood by on the bank.

Now that I was in college, father bought me a bicycle. But in school, I had to plod in the sun, rain and cold, as he thought I must learn to walk long distances under all conditions. Nor was I allowed any pocket-money as, according to him, it led to bad habits. He ridiculed my running the 440 yards race. 'Fancy running just four hundred odd yards', he would say, 'instead of riding hard for miles like a man.' He described participation in drama, poetry and music as effeminate pastimes; he said that to be in debt was like being caught in a vice.

I first saw Jawaharlal Nehru when he was addressing a public meeting, soon after becoming the youngest Congress President, in 1929. As he stepped on the dais to speak,

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deafening cheers greeted this elegant and sleek symbol of resurgent India. He had well chiselled and handsome features and looked like a marble statue. He inspired the mammoth audience by his fearless reference to revolution and said sorrowfully that he shared with us a sense of shame at India's crushed and starving populace. This visionary graduate of Cambridge electrified us all by mentioning the destiny of India and of mankind in the same breath. Here was an ideal synthesis of the East and the West who was to risk his life wherever liberty was threatened. Apart from India, he was found in later years, amidst Fascist bullets in Barcelona and in the thick of bombing in Chungking, 'marching step by step with history'. Little did I know then what an important part he was to play in my life later.

The National Movement in India was now in full swing and I, like so many others, was yearning to become a part of this upsurge. About this time a girl named Raj, who knew me well in college, asked me over for dinner to her house. When we were by ourselves, her mother having retired for rest, she asked if I would like to do some work in the terrorist movement. I could hardly believe my ears. This was just the sort of opportunity I hoped I would get one day, ever since I had heard the harrowing account of the Jallianwala Bagh and so jumped at her offer. She cautioned me to think carefully before agreeing, as some of the assignments given to me might be full of risks. This only made me reiterate my pledge. I could see how patriotism pulsated within this girl, as she shook hands with me warmly in obvious approbation.

A few days later, I was allotted my first task of pasting a nationalistic poster at the entrance of a British official's residence with a guard. This was a symbol of defiance of foreign authority. I was thrilled at the prospect of this adventure and made numerous but careful reconnaissances of the site over three or four nights at different

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times. I found that after midnight the guard, in the course of going up and down the compound of the bungalow, remained away from the gate for gaps of many minutes at a stretch. This would give me sufficient time to do my job and get away safely. One night, I crept up to the gate and duly stuck the required poster, unnoticed. As I whistled away on my bicycle, I revelled at my debut in this field.

My second assignment came a few days later. It was to deliver a parcel to a mendicant in the Old Fort. This was done, at the dead of night, without knowing who the recipient was, what I carried or its purpose as is often the case in such hush-hush missions.

Sir John Simon had come to India as Chairman of a Commission for reporting how desirable it was to establish or restrict self-government in India. There was deep resentment against this Commission throughout the country. It was thought to be a contrivance on the part of the British Government to retard our self-rule. Black flags bearing 'Go Back Simon' confronted him wherever he went. When he came to Delhi, I did the same to him, as a mark of protest. We had a field day (nearly a hundred thousand people from all walks of life having assembled for the occasion) and gave a hot reception to this unwelcome visitor.

I often visited the Legislative Assembly and heard stirring speeches by stalwarts like Pandit Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malviya and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. One day, I had gone to attend a debate on what was called the Public Safety Bill which the British were trying to push through the House and under which they could detain anyone without trial indefinitely. Public galleries were packed on that exciting day. I remember Pandit Motilal Nehru warming up in the House and saying: 'I am not one of those who shiver in their shoes at the name of. . . .'. Soon after, there was a commotion in the House. Two young men, sitting next to me, whom I did not know, suddenly sprang up to

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their feet. One of them pulled out a bundle of leaflets from under his coat and threw it in all directions. These leaflets carried the caption 'To make the deaf hear... motto of the French Revolution', and, in a flash, two bombs had been hurled in quick succession by Bhagat Singh[1] and B. K. Dutt which exploded on the floor of the House creating a resounding blast. Pandemonium was let loose and people ran helter-skelter. A fat and frightened nominated member crawled under a bench to save his skin. Another one ran towards a lavatory. Only two leaders kept standing like rock: Vithal Bhai Patel and Pandit Motilal Nehru. The latter shouted at members of his party: *Are bhai, bhagtey kiyon ho! Yeh to koi apne hi admi malum hote hain* (Look chums, why are you bolting away? They —the bomb-thrower and his companion—look like our own men).

I along with many people was detained on suspicion. Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dutt, however, surrendered to the police, lest some innocent persons should be apprehended. As these two revolutionaries were being removed in police custody to a lock-up from the Assembly Chamber, they shouted 'Inqilab Zindabad[2]' (Long Live Revolution) and walked fearlessly past the crowds like two tigers. I looked at them with pride. The bomb they had thrown shook Indians throughout the country.

I heard that recently Lala Lajpat Rai, the redoubtable leader of Punjab, had lost his life as a result of a blow inflicted by Saunders, a British Police Officer, during the course of a baton charge on a nationalist procession led by

1 When someone asked Gandhi what he thought of this violent act by Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dutt, he said: 'I believe in peace. But I do *not* want peace at any price. I do not want peace that you find in stone, I do not want peace that you find in the grave. Where there is only choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence.'

2 It was the first time this slogan was being raised. Later it became the battle-cry with all the nationalist forces.

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him. This infuriated many people, including Bhagat Singh, a member of the Revolutionary Party, who daringly shot Saunders dead opposite the Police Headquarters. He had taken an eye for an eye. Bhagat Singh had absconded till he appeared in the incident described above.

Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dutt were tried and sentenced to death and transportation of life respectively. I heard from a reliable source when I was on my way to a bonfire of British goods that Bhagat Singh, an idol of the nation by now, was to be hanged in the District jail at Lahore that day. I was emotionally aroused on hearing this news and went to a vantage point from where I could see the walls of the jail behind which Bhagat Singh stood ready to die.

In reverential silence, I shared the sorrow of the whole nation. I heard an eye-witness account, later, of how unflinchingly he had faced his doom. Two others besides Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and Sukh Dev, were being hanged that day for loving their country. When Bhagat Singh's turn came, he was given a mask, to cover his face, before he went up to the gallows. He threw it away scornfully and advanced, his chin up, and with a steady and unfaltering step, solemnly kissed his gallows, saying he was lucky to be laying down his life for his country; he then bade good-bye to the Indian jailor, doctor and magistrate, who stood there as silent witnesses. He was hanged, with his eyes breathing fire and with revolution on his lips. The handful of Indian officials present at the time hung their heads in sorrow and in shame for hanging a patriotic compatriot.

The British had not allowed Bhagat Singh's body to be handed over to his next-of-kin, fearing that it would incite the masses. It is alleged that his charred corpse was left on the dry bed of the river Sutlej where it was found by the locals the next morning. It was then brought down to Lahore where the people seemed to run 'amuck' at the sight of their idol's remains. I was among the multitude of a quarter million people who followed the remains of this

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martyr to the cremation ground to pay their last homage. The whole country sobbed for their hero.

(Thirty-six years later, I heard that the renowned patriot B. K. Dutt was lying seriously ill in the Medical Institute, Delhi, and went there to find out how he was on 11 February 1965. I had never set my eyes on him since 1929. When I told him I had seen him on the day he and Bhagat Singh threw the bombs in the Legislative Assembly many years ago, his eyes brightened up. He told me he had been a member of the Revolutionary Party since he was about 17 and never imagined he would hit the headlines one day. He and Bhagat Singh had volunteered for a job, the grave consequence of which they fully realized. They were glad to have offered their lives in the service of their country. He told me that it was not until Bhagat Singh and he had courted arrest that they were apprehended. They did this lest unnecessary reprisals were inflicted upon innocent Indians. Dutt was released a few years later due to ill health but was arrested again in 1942. Due to continuous sufferings in and out of jail, his health cracked up. He had been very ill in the last few months. He said Gulzarilal Nanda had now brought him here for medical attention. Talking of Bhagat Singh, he said the latter was informed by the authorities about five o'clock one evening that he was to be hanged a few hours later. Bhagat Singh and two other revolutionaries, Raj Guru and Sukh Dev, then walked fearlessly to their gallows and gave their lives for their country with great courage and pride. He went on to say that their bodies were cremated by government the same day on the dry bed of river Sutlej and left there mercilessly half-charred, as I have described earlier.

I was moved beyond words to see this great revolutionary, now lying broken in body and shattered in health. There was fire in his eyes and his spirit was undaunted even today. I told him I was honoured to meet one whose deeds in 1929 had stirred me and I was inspired to hear how he had kept

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challenging his destiny to this day. In bidding farewell, I wished him the best of luck and asked him to let me know if there was any little thing I could do for him. With tears in his eyes and sadness in his voice, he replied: 'There is nothing I want from anyone.' [3]

Ironically, despite all the tributes everyone paid to him on his death in July 1965, Dutt whose bravery had hastened our freedom once had to earn his livelihood, even after 1947, by having to start a bakery and running a bus service.)

Father had come back home from office, complaining of a severe headache. A little later, he began feeling giddy and then losing his speech and sight. Doctors diagnosed that he had haemorrhage of the brain. This meant he might die any minute. Mother and I were petrified at the thought. Seeing his approaching end, he asked us both to come near his bedside and spoke in a faint voice, just before his speech failed: 'Time is short and I must say a few words before I depart. I hope you will keep up your courage. Don't ever take back the money I have given to Harnarain and Aziz, two old friends of mine. They are in straitened circumstances and in no position to return what they took from me. I never expected them to do so. I know you will be hard up but you are young and they are not. It is, therefore, my wish that you should leave them alone.'

At this point he placed my mother's hand into mine and said:

'I hope you will always take good care of her.'

Lastly, he managed to whisper, as he was weakening fast:

'Remember, money is at the root of all troubles in life. Never have lust for it, nor borrow it from anyone. And

3 He died in July 1965 and was cremated near Ferozepur where the bodies of his comrades Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and Sukh Dev were cremated years ago.

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now... I must... take your leave.'

He gasped for breath, looking helplessly at us and then he was gone for ever.

A cloud of gloom descended upon us. My mother's world crashed in a heap. I consoled my two brothers and sister. The family faced a bleak prospect. Pitiless destiny waited around the corner to settle its scores with us. This was in March 1930, when I was not yet eighteen.

We folded up our household in a few days' time, dispensed with our old servants and belongings which seemed redundant and which we could ill afford now. The servants wept as they said good-bye to us.

The ranks of our friends grew thinner as the days went by. We did not have the heart to continue living in Delhi and decided moving to Lahore. Hardly anyone came to bid farewell to us when we left and I saw the fickleness of friends in one's distress for the first—but not the last—time.

On reaching Lahore we did not know where to go. We had planned little before coming. Mother sat with the children and the luggage at the railway station, whilst I went out hunting for a house on rent. By chance, I found a modest apartment later that day, to which all five of us moved. That night, mother, I, my two brothers and sister slept on empty stomachs. When we woke up the next morning, we realized how cramped we were in our new abode. Comparisons are odious but we could not help drawing them with our past comforts and reconciled ourselves to our new life in due course.

Father's insurances had lapsed; all the property he owned had to be mortgaged during my sister's illness; we, therefore, inherited nothing worth the name and had little on which to live. He was only forty-seven when he died. Mother and I agreed that we must brave our adversity alone and rise again by the sweat of our brow or fall. There should be no two ways about it. This challenging situation gave me a purpose in life.

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We led a lonely and deserted existence and craved for friends but people evaded us now. There were times when we could only have one square meal a day; we could afford new clothes with a pinch, and it was not easy for us to have the necessary medicines during illness. Luxuries were now a dream. We suffered many indignities and social injustices and were often at the end of our tether but kept sticking it out somehow. As, however, we had decided not to bow, ego and pride kept egging us on. I made a vow and swore by Almighty God—and by all that I held dear—that I would strain every nerve to challenge life in full measure and one day be in a position to settle scores with my fate, if possible.

I was admitted into the Government College[4] at Lahore which had an excellent staff including talented Professors like Garret, Dickenson and Langhorn as also Ahmed Shah Bukhari. I studied hard and took full part in most activities of the college including sports, dramatics and declamation. Cricket was my favourite game.

I sought a life of adventure and found some of my contemporaries in my last college, including Harish Sircar, going into the Air Force. I wanted to emulate their example. Two of my present classmates, however, had been selected for the Army and talked me into applying for it. When I saw the District Magistrate, Lahore, he told me that due to my political activities, it was doubtful whether my application would get through. I quipped I was only indulging in legitimate nationalistic pursuits, along with the whole country. Moreover, I was trying to join my own Army, not any foreign force. I did not, therefore, see what objection there could be to my application. Whatever the reasons, I was allowed to appear for the Army entrance examination. It must be said to the British sense of sagacity that despite my background, they gave me very high marks in the oral examination and a few months later, I was selected for

4 I was at the St. Stephens, Delhi earlier.

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Sandhurst. Luck was beginning to turn again and society took a second look at me. Many messages of congratulations poured in from all directions. A glow of happiness appeared on my mother's face.

It was all very well being selected for Sandhurst. But the question was: how to pay for the expenses abroad. This came to quite a packet. Nothing was farther from my mind than to touch mother's paltry purse. Although she offered me what little she had, I had made up my mind to fend for myself. I firstly applied to the Adjutant General, Army Headquarters, for financial help, in view of my adverse circumstances. I sent in my application in the normal way, but followed it up by taking a trip to the Army Headquarters at Simla. I did not know a soul in this Pentagon of India, but after days of running around circles, managed an interview with, if I remember aright, Lt Gen Twiss, the Adjutant General. As I stood before him, he looked at me, as a giant looks at a gnat, his bark worse than his bite, heard my story briefly and blared: 'I do not know whether I am doing the right thing, but for all the cheek you have shown in blundering through various hurdles in reaching me, on your own, I think you deserve, apart from a kick in the pants, some bouquet also. I therefore grant you rupees Five Thousand as reduction of fees in view of your straitened circumstances. Best of luck.' I took my hat off to him. This was the sporting trait in the British which the world admired.

I came back to Lahore, borrowed, with difficulty, the balance of the money which I had to remit to Government and got ready to set sail for England.

About this time I received a message from Nimmi's mother that the former was seriously ill and had been asking for me in a state of delirium. I rushed to her side without losing a minute. She looked pale and haggard, her hair dishevelled, her eyes almost without life and her lips parched and quivering. But as I entered the room, her face seemed to light up. I knelt beside her bed and held her

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feeble, trembling hands in my own, wishing with all my heart that she be well again. She was burning in fever, and was in great anguish. Her mother took me to the next room to say that doctors had diagnosed her disease as meningitis and feared the worst. The pain of death, which was written on her face, seemed more unbearable than death itself. As she was sinking fast, we gathered around her bed and after a few minutes she was dead. It was terrible seeing a beautiful girl lying inert and without any sign of life and impossible to reconcile that she would never speak again. She was only nineteen. Her memory has kept conjuring up in my mind to this day.

I left for Bombay en route to England the next day. Quite a crowd had assembled to bid me bon voyage. Just before my train moved off, Brijlal, one of my old tutors, muscled up from the rear and slipped into my hand what seemed a scrap of paper. Actually it turned out to be a hundred-rupee note with 'Best Wishes' written on it in pencil. And this from a man who could barely make both ends meet! I had a lump in my throat.

I sailed from Bombay in *S. S. Mantua* one fine morning along with about ten other cadets not out of our teens yet and drawn from different parts of India. We were all full of beans at the thought of going abroad. That evening some of us sat together in the cocktail lounge. As the butler asked each of us our drink, everyone ordered whisky, gin or other alcohol with a seasoned air. When I asked for a soft drink, my companions insisted I should have some alcohol and ridiculed me when I refused. They caught me on the raw and put me on a war path. I therefore did not change my mind. In fact, I went one step further and to this day, I have neither smoked nor touched alcohol. I am not quoting this as a virtue but just stating a fact.

We went through Port Said, Gibralter and Marseilles

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before reaching Tilbury docks, London. I was becoming 'curiouser and curiouser' at all the fascinating spectacles I saw. It was already night when we dashed past the British capital, speeding across a dazzling array of multi-coloured lights, through what looked like a fairyland studded with fabulous fleeting sights. When we reached Sandhurst, which is about an hour's run from London, the whole place seemed dead. I could see little of what lay around me. A cockney company Quartermaster Sergeant met us on arrival. He never smiled, looked glum and shouted instead of speaking. He told me I was assigned to number one company.[5] All I did that night was to fall asleep as soon as I reached my room. It had been some day.

During the next few days a horde of office bearers told us, in turn, all about this place, the gist of which was as follows.

This was the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, the best institution of its kind. It was known as RMC for short. It had unique traditions and was the Mecca of discipline. We would become officers after three terms of about six months each, if we were lucky enough to last that long. We would have two long breaks during our course. We were known as Gentlemen Cadets aspiring to become officers but were neither quite gentlemen nor quite officers. There were facilities for all games available here including Pentathelon. The college consisted of two blocks, the new and the old building. Number one and three companies were in the former and four and five in the latter. A lake stood almost opposite the old building with boating facilities. Barrossa, a thick glen, lay behind the college and through it ran a golf course, among other things. We were told a HIPE meant a rifle, the SHOP stood for Woolwich and that we had to salute each time we passed the Regimental Colours.

The Commandant of the College was Maj Gen Sir

5 It had been declared the champion company three times running and was popularly referred to as 'lovely one.'

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Reginald May, K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., P.S.C. Commandants of Sandhurst were always picked men of outstanding merit and the staff under them was also selected with great care.

That day we drew our books, stationery and other items of equipment. We were measured for our uniforms and double-marched for various other purposes from one point to the other all day long. Cadets were being licked into shape and shaken out of lethargy. I was overawed as we assembled for dinner on our first Guest Night. It was an impressive sight, nearly a thousand cadets sitting around several symmetrical rows of tables, nicely decked up in their Royal blue overalls. After dinner, as decanters of Port and Sherry started moving from one end of the table towards me, I felt fidgety and wondered if I could refrain from drinking the King's health in alcohol. Just then, a British Major who was an instructor and sat next to me, saw my predicament and told me not to worry if I was a teetotaller, as he was one also, and said I could drink the King's health in Soda or in water as I chose. I heaved a sigh of relief.

We were always fallen in for everything; for drill, physical training, riding and for all sorts of other parades. When the Senior Under Officer inspected us, he would suddenly bark 'hair-cut', arbitrarily, although we had had one only that morning. All the same, this oracle—a paragon of discipline—had spoken and his word was final. You could never answer him back without dire consequences. This was part of the game and this was how you learnt discipline. So you went, cursing under your breath and had another hair-cut that afternoon. The barber was an old hand at the game and nearly shaved your head off to save you from coming back to him the next day. On another occasion, the Senior Under Officer would touch your shoulder with his cane and mutter 'fluff on parade.' This meant some flying particle had got stuck to your tunic. And so on....

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As Juniors, we were not allowed to go about out-doors without a head-dress, with buttons of our jackets or coats undone or with our hands in the pockets. We had many other restrictions in order to put us in our place.

The Senior Under Officer held an interesting office. He wielded great authority over the cadets and, what is more, used it. He was chosen carefully for above average skill in drill, physical training as also ability in studies. He set the example we had to follow and he was to be obeyed without question. One of his types usually won the King's Medal or the Sword of Honour, distinctions to be envied, at the end of the final term.

Cadets fell in for drill, tallest on the right, shortest on the left. The Company Sergeant-Major took charge. 'Company, Atten—tion :' he shouted. Then a plethora of words of command were let loose: 'By the right, quick march. Lef' Righ' Lef' Righ'. Wake up for Christ's sake and don't move, you there, sir! Stand still, Mr. so-and-so! Squad-Lef' turn-Right-turn. About-turn. For Lor's sake, sir,' he would throw a contemptuous look, this tall and wiry guardsman, and then resume: 'Look to your front—keep your chin up—don't look down—swing your arms—stick your chest out—Lef' Righ' Lef'. That's better. Now, now ! Hold it! Company will come to a halt. COM—PA—NY—Halt !' And so dozens of drill movements went on, day in and day out, till the Sergeant-Major had instilled in us an implicit sense of obedience to words of command, synchronizing them with smart and spontaneous movements.

The Sergeant-Major was not bothered about the lineage of anyone in particular and was only dedicated to his task of turning out cadets as worthy leaders. When addressing us on parade, he usually started with a Sir and ended up with an abuse. He would look down from his 6′ 3″ and bark unconcerned: 'Cor Blimey. 'e is funny looking, innee? At this rate, he will end up in the gutter. The Royal Horse Guards won't look at 'im! . . . . Why, you are walking like

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a bird in a cage! Buck up Mr. so-and-so! What *is* the matter with you?'

Some British NCOs or Warrant Officers, when measuring paces within ranks, never said, 'one, two, three, four' but counted in their own novel way: 'Ace, King, Queen, Jack.' They had many other idiosyncrasies. They were wedded to their assignment and were never overawed by the presence of the inspecting officer, irrespective of his rank or status.

Cadets came to Sandhurst from various levels of British society, including many scions of nobility; Lords, Dukes, relations of the Royalty and boys from Eton, Harrow and Wellington. Some of them were going to serve with the elite Royal Horse Guards, the Coldstream Guards or other crack regiments.

I had heard that Churchill had three shots before he managed to get into Sandhurst, and Montgomery did not cover himself with glory, passing out from the RMC as only a private. I, therefore, knew that it was not going to be a bed of roses! Those who did well here did not always prosper in the years to come. On the other hand, those who did not fare well at this College, sometimes excelled in later life. For instance, many who won gallantry decorations in a battle-field did not necessarily deserve advancement in the army solely on that consideration. As they acquired higher ranks, a variety of responsibilities fell upon their shoulders in which they were required to display a combination of many virtues.

In the physical training class, you climbed ropes and beams, did horse work and other simple and complicated exercises. It taught you, as in drill, working together in a team.

I enjoyed my equitation as I had learnt it long before I went to Sandhurst. When the instructor shouted 'Trrr—ot,' or 'Quit and Cross the Stirrups,' expert riders thought

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it was fun but some others fumbled.

I learnt playing golf and had the audacity to go round the courses at Gleneagles and St. Andrews when in Scotland. But on returning home, I never resumed this luxurious pastime.

At the end of each term, all cadets of the new and old building used to charge on each other, riding wildly on their bicycles and shouting till they were hoarse. There were many casualties in this affray but it taught us a sense of fanatical purpose. The guns of the college which adorned various entrances were thrown this evening in the lake, as an act of pure hooliganism. In this lake were also pushed cadets who had let down their side in some way, such as failing in the riding test or being instrumental in losing a company championship. This was an evening of spree and revelry.

I noticed that Indians were allowed to hold only an honorary rank of up to a Corporal and could go no higher, unlike others. Nor could they command anyone except their own nationals. This discrimination seemed incongruous in a great Academy like Sandhurst.

The institution of the under officer at the RMC had its own traditions. He was a cross between an officer and a cadet and wielded considerable prestige and power over the cadets. At every provocation, he would threaten to put them in the quarterguard.

I saw many cadets wearing a straw hat as the Prince of Wales (later, Duke of Windsor) had set that fashion. So I also bought one in London during a weekend leave and came back to Sandhurst wearing it. When a British under officer saw me in this hat, he shouted:

'You can't wear that hat!'

'Others are wearing it. Why can't I?' I asked.

'Because I say so,' he thundered back.

And before I knew, he had taken my straw hat off and crushed it under his foot. He had two other British boys

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standing next to him. They all had a hearty laugh.

'Now, go to hell,' the Under Officer blared.

I swallowed my feelings with tears of anger but not for long. Two days later Baghel Singh, a fellow cadet and I were in our room, playing on a harmonium, which I had taken with me from India. British cadets always raised a hue and cry on hearing this loud instrument in the evenings, whilst they kept playing their Ukuleles merrily. It was a supper night, which meant we could go to dinner in our own time between certain hours. I continued playing on the harmonium and singing noisy Indian melodies. I knew there would be trouble but was looking for a scrap and this gave me a good chance. The Under Officer, who had recently broken my hat under his foot, lived near my bunk and rushed up to my room on hearing this racket.

'Shut this row!' He ordered.

My friend Baghel who happened to be with me at the time and I took no notice and continued. This infuriated the Under Officer.

'I'll throw this contraption out of this window if you don't stop this din,' he blared.

We both got up. Baghel held me back with his left arm and advanced menacingly towards the Englishman.

'Look here, you stick in the mud, if you won't shut up and get out of this room this minute, I will throw *you* out of this window,' he thundered. The Under Officer knew he was up against a sticky situation. All his flair deserted him when he saw this boxer meant to kill. Discretion became the better part of valour and this big bully just slunk away.

A few days later, a British cadet came into my room, out of the blue and said, 'Do you know what I think of Gandhi?'

I did not know this son of a gun who asked me the question.

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'No,' I replied.

'Oh, this "Gandy", his legs are bandy.' He rhymed in ridicule.

I was as furious as a British Cadet would be on hearing some juvenile jest against Jesus Christ. Before I could get up, he had banged the door on me and disappeared like a needle in a haystack.

If one was awarded a King's (India) cadetship, one also received, apart from its stamp, a lucrative monetary dollop with it. I thought this windfall would never come my way, considering the rough passage I was having at Sandhurst. But one day I got a letter from the War Office informing me that this award had been approved for me. This was great news. My debts in India would now be repaid in one stroke with this monetary grant. I could never hope to do so on my own for years to come, within a subaltern's pay and with my other commitments. British justice kept taking pleasant turns!

In the summer break of nearly two months, everyone went home except Indians who went to London, Paris or other holiday resorts for the accepted fun and games. Being fond of mountains, I went to a small and beautiful hamlet in the Scottish highlands known as Pitlochry. It was a place out of this world so far as scenic beauty was concerned. But there were only two other visitors in the place, an old Scot, named McKee and his wife. We were staying in a deserted boarding house called Knockendarroch. The next day their two daughters, Margaret and Ena, came on a fortnight's holiday. Ena was spirited and full of verve and life; and Margaret, a complete opposite of her sister. She was a beautiful girl, walked with rare grace, had tender limbs, delicate hands and many of her words remained unsaid. She had golden hair like silk. She and I ate together, went out for long walks, climbed adjoining hills and picnicked, enjoying every minute of each other's company. Margaret and I often lay on the

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luscious lawns of Knockendarroch, exchanging mutual reminiscences. There was no doubt that we were growing very fond of each other but never spoke of it. I had never liked anyone so much and began to have a new perception of things. The sky seemed bluer, the stars brighter and I thought I could hear music in the air. Margaret had wafted into my life like the fragrance of a flower. Byron has described my feelings aptly when he said :

> She was his life
> The ocean to the river of his thoughts
> Which terminated all.

Time passed swiftly, as it always does in such cases, and the day of departure of the McKee family drew near. On the night before, I frantically scribbled a short message in which I asked Margaret whether I could see her alone for five minutes later that night. I was dying to tell her of the struggle which was going on in my mind and what prevented me from professing my love to her. I went into her room earlier that evening when she was not there and placed the message carefully under her pillow. But, alas, this move misfired. The maid who came to make her bed that night discovered my message under her pillow and gave it to Margaret's parents! There were no scenes but much sulking followed so far as the parents were concerned. The next day I had gone to see them off at the railway station. Just before they left, the McKees were cordial to me once again and asked me what I would do alone in Pitlochry and why I did not come along with them. I could stay in their house in Broughty Ferry, see St. Andrews, which was nearby, and other places of interest in Scotland. I needed no persuasion and soon after, we all foregathered in 'Chimo', their house in Broughty Ferry, near Dundee.

Margaret and I went shopping, to the pictures, and did ice-skating together. She taught me the solo Scottish

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'Hi'–land dance (which, I found, later, all Subalterns had to learn in the Rajputana Rifles), many songs by Robbie Burns and also told me how few Englishmen could ever pronounce 'Brau bricht moonlicht nicht tonicht'. We spent much time together but somehow never managed to talk about ourselves. She was perhaps waiting for me to say something first. . . .

One day we were left in the house alone. It was a cold day and there was a blazing fire in the living room. She moved towards the fire, sat down on a low stool beside it and motioned me gently to sit near her.

'Aren't you going to say something to me, Bij?' She purred.

'I want to say. . . so much. . . but. . .' I stammered.

'Then what is stopping you?' She asked impatiently. 'Look Bij,' She continued, 'would you like to come out for a dance with me tonight? Perhaps you would find it easier to tell me what is on your mind when we are gliding together on the floor.'

'Margaret,' I said 'I would love to dance with you but the trouble is, I don't know dancing.'

'Oh, come on, I'll teach you dancing tonight. It is not difficult to learn. You have music in your step,' she said.

My temples throbbed and my heart beat faster than ever. As we got ready to go, the door bell rang and to our dismay, her parents came back earlier than expected. The father was not feeling well and decided to make for home earlier. There was no question now of our going out. Margaret could teach no dancing to me, not that night anyhow. And, what is more, I would not be able to unburden my heart to her for which she waited so eagerly. It was an anti-climax to an extraordinary situation. A few minutes later, good nights were exchanged abruptly and everyone retired for the night. There seemed to be tension in the air. I then resolved that I would never dance unless Margaret taught me the first steps. But this was

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not to be and to this day I have not learnt how to dance. I then wrote a long letter to her in which I said I was going to leave for London later that night without saying good-bye to her as she would be fast asleep at the time. In this letter I confessed my adoration for her and my mental conflict which prevented me from getting closer to her. My affections could never be flirtatious, I wrote, and if I were to persist in courting her, unblushingly, I felt I should make her share the rest of my life. This is just where the hurdles came. And they were not fair to her. I had a family to support and my financial commitments would cramp my style in doing justice to her. I could never look after her as one whom I loved so dearly. There was then the question of the political strife raging in India between the British and ourselves. She, as British, would inevitably become a victim of circumstances and be compelled to face unnecessary embarrassments on many occasions. She might even be humiliated in this bargain in some unforeseen situation which I could never accept. This theme could be rationalized but had no practical solution. Accordingly, I did not have the heart to put her on the horns of a continuing dilemma. It was best perhaps to let my desires be nipped in the bud rather than to continue my adoration for her in a selfish strain. I closed this letter with a heavy heart, slipped it under the door and slunk away from their house in the small hours of that morning, never to set eyes again on my beloved Margaret. It was a terrible wrench but may be it was better that way.

I got back Margaret's reply in London, reciprocating my feelings and taking me to task affectionately for going away from her like this without saying good-bye.

Margaret kept spreading across my later life, without ever meeting me, just as a rainbow spreads across the sky without touching it.

I still had some weeks of holidays left and so went

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touring through Europe. I went like a hurricane through Paris, saw skiing in St. Moritz, drifted in gondolas in Venice, the Vesuvius in Naples, the Reichstag in Berlin, went to operas and heard music in Vienna and Budapest. I was trying to flee away from Margaret's memories and from her image.

During the period stated above, I was going in a crowded train from Calais to Venice. It was already past midnight and I was dozing off in a small compartment when I noticed an attractive young couple coming in. They appeared dishevelled and fatigued. We made room for them and they squeezed in. As the train moved on, the girl fell in deep slumber in no time. The man sat next to me and after a warm conversation asked me if he could have a word with me alone in the corridor. He said he was a racing motorist in Italy. About two months ago, doctors had told him that he had contracted tuberculosis due to abnormal strain and had not long to live. The girl who had met him recently knew nothing of his doom and was anxious that they were married as soon as possible. He had been hesitating so far whether to tell her the truth and they were on their way to Venice to get married. His conscience was now in revolt and he wondered what he should do. Although I told him I was the wrong man to be consulted in matters of sentiment, he chose to confide in me that he proposed detraining wherever the train halted next and never meet the girl again in view of the unfortunate position in which he was placed. He said he would be grateful if I could give suitable explanation to her after he had gone and also escort her back to Cornwall from where she came. I protested that this was putting me in a spot and not really right. At this point the train came to a halt and my friend suddenly got down and was lost in the darkness of a wayside station. I lingered on in the corridor. The girl was still fast asleep. I was unable to muster sufficient courage to tell her what had happened as it

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would not seem plausible. As I was myself running away from another situation, I was not prepared to get involved in this affair. I remained in this state of confusion for some time. The train after a while came to halt once again. I got off hurriedly and there I was left at the mercy of an unknown station, as the train steamed off again. I thought that was the best thing to do in the circumstances. I do not know what happened to the girl or to her dying lover, as I never met them again. As for myself, I waited for some hours, caught another train and continued my wanderings. When I trailed back to London at the fag end of my holiday, I had barely five shillings left in my pocket. I remember meeting Kochhar, a Sapper colleague of mine, near Piccadilly Circus, by chance. He slipped a five-quid note in my pocket to tide over the next three days. I never forgot this friendly gesture.

I continued at Sandhurst, moving from one term to another, learning to become a soldier. In my second term, my company commander, Major Horton, wrote in a report on me: 'This officer has decided ability and his conduct is good. He is marked in personality and character; and has self-assurance and enthusiasm. His work is good and he has brains and ability. He will do well. A most satisfactory start. Successful at games.' At last I came to the end of my third term and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant under the strains of the 'Auld Lang Syne' and after what was a memorable passing out parade in July 1933.

I had imbibed much at Sandhurst. I learnt a code of conduct, a sense of discipline and the significance of honour.[6] I was taught a set of principles true to spiritual values by which can be judged what is right. I acquired

6 Honour is something within one, synonymous to one's conscience and with which one has to live.

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the rudiments of military knowledge, the basic techniques of my profession and to appreciate the importance of turnout and skill at professional work and games as also to face agreeable and unpleasant situations alike. I was taught how to play the game, to know what the qualities of leadership were, the sense of many values and the honour of serving one's country selflessly and with devotion.

I became acquainted with the complex English character. I began to understand how the Englishman lived on the legends of the Westminster Abbey and saw how he had implicit faith in the institution of his Royalty, Parliament and his own sense of fairplay and justice. He was bewildered when his faith was shaken by anomalies occasionally. To him the right school, the right university, belonging to the right club and having the right accent meant much and helped him to get on in life. He thrived on kippers and knew the vintage of the wine he drank. He enjoyed the *Punch* and *The Times* and took pride in the BBC, the BOAC and the Rolls Royce. He knew the history of Nelson's column, Piccadilly, the Tower, Wimbledon, Wembley and the Tests at Lords. He was taught that when he played games, it was not to win or lose, but only for exercise.

He minded his own business and remained generally aloof. A stranger in the train or the bus had little hope of making friends with him. He loved Balmoral, Buckingham Palace, racing, horses, dogs and Johnnie Walker. He tolerated the lone orator on a soap box in Hyde Park. He justly boasted about his theatre and conceded that Shakespeare might be shared with the rest of the world. He was more prim and proper than any of his western counterparts. He still wore his bowler hat and always had a laugh against himself.

I now understood why the Englishman was known as John Bull and why his nation was so strongly knit together.

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After a pleasant voyage, I came back home again. Just before the Frontier Mail came to a halt, I could see mother rushing up to me. She was thrilled meeting me after what seemed an age and threw at me a barrage of questions about my stay abroad. We met like long-lost friends. My little brothers[7] nicknamed Babboo and Tommy and sister Nanni were in hysterics, having me with them again. Mother's proud eyes never left my uniform. That night she and I sat and talked our heads off till an hour which was late judged by any standards.

I was now to command British troops for a year. The Englishmen, however, thought that Indians lacked qualities of leadership to command *any* troops, let alone the British. They doubted if we could make the grade as officers. According to them, we had an inferior mind and could not comprehend the intricacies of an aeroplane, a tank or a gun and the intricate affairs of war. I was reminded here of Lord Ellenborough who said in 1833 that the existence of the British in India depended upon the exclusion of Indians from military and political power.

Such was the background of the British under whom I had to serve now. There was no doubt in my mind that though they were excellent individuals, their Raj in India must terminate as soon as possible so that we should run our country independently at the earliest opportunity.

It was, therefore, in a spirit of challenge that I reported for duty to the 1st Battalion of East Surrey Regiment located in the Birdwood Barracks at Lahore in November 1933. I was twenty-one years old then and stood at the threshold of a new life.

All Indian Army officers had to do a year's probationary period with a British battalion in which they went through the paces, as it were, before joining their Indian battalion.

7 Though they were my step-brothers and sister, I have always looked upon them as my own.

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My Commanding Officer was Lt Col Schomberg, D.S.O., a wiry middle-aged man and a stickler for discipline and military tradition. He gave me a dubious reception as he did to all new comers.

I found there were four fields of activity in the battalion: the Range, the drill square, games and the mess. I strove hard in each of them, became a good rifle shot, survived the drill square, held a minor office in the mess and did not do too badly in games, playing cricket in the First Eleven and running 440 yards for the battalion.

A British unit was an excellent institution. It was like a large family with high traditions. The Commanding Officer was its father and mother. His word was law and he was the monarch of all he surveyed. His decisions were infallible. He was a colossus who stood above all else. We seldom saw him in flesh and blood. There was the second in command who was responsible for the turn-out of officers, the mess, the band and accounts. Then came the Adjutant who enjoyed a privileged position. He dealt with ceremonials and drill and was a terror to the junior officers. He had the unpleasant task of enforcing discipline and usually became unpopular in the process. Subalterns were divided into two categories, the senior and the junior. The senior subaltern was an old hand, his service ranging anything between seven to fifteen years. Promotion in those days in British service was by vacancy and not by time scale. The senior subaltern was often frustrated and hence took pleasure in sadistically 'torturing' all subalterns alike. If they erred, he was authorized to give them punishment such as extra sword drill, in the burning sun, while he stood in a patch of shade himself. One was supposed to be adolescent between three and six years of service. Below three, one was to be seen, not heard.

I remember the Adjutant once having given the subaltern clan a bad spell, much to our irritation. We, therefore, decided to teach him a lesson. On the next guest

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night, the senior subaltern invited him after dinner, when it was customary to play various games, to what was known as a cock-fight. In this affray, the two contestants, lying on the floor, locked their legs and tried to twist them through skill and strength, till one lay prostrate. The Adjutant was a big hefty fellow and was sure of victory. The fight had just commenced when all the subalterns fell upon him, as pre-arranged and, by their sheer weight, crushed his leg. He could not walk straight for days thereafter. No one could do anything about this sort of 'popular action'. He mellowed down considerably after this incident and we had an easier time in the battalion.

We had many unwritten laws to obey: be present on parade five minutes before time, never answer back a senior nor argue, never threaten but punish when necessary, be acquainted with various tunes of the regimental band, both on parade and in the mess, know enough history and customs of the regiment. Proper turn-out and decorum on all occasions was essential. The junior subalterns were supposed to dine in the mess regularly, know all about its silver and be generally useful to their seniors. The mess[8] was their home. They had to play 'bad' bridge and slosh till late hours of the night, drinking alcohol. They were expected to come to the mess early and never be in a hurry to go home. If they defaulted, they were 'on the mat' before someone the next morning. What followed was no laughing matter.

Each British battalion had different 'customs' in the mess. Some of them drank the King's health standing whilst other battalions did so sitting and yet some did not drink at all as their loyalty was considered above reproach. Only the Worcesters could wear swords in the mess. Their regimental customs also varied similarly. For instance the Grenadier Guards could march through

8 Messes were started in the early eighteenth century.

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the city of London with fixed bayonets, colours flying and drums beating as only they were raised in London as long ago as 1656. The Royal Welsh Fusiliers always had a goat preceding their march past with gilded horns and ringlets of flowers and did so even at the battle of Bunker Hill (in the American War of Independence) on 17 June 1775. The origin of the custom of carrying colours went back to the days of early man who fixed his family badge to a pole and held it prominently in battle, for indicating his own position as also to act as a rallying point when necessary. Colours are the symbols of the spirit of the Regiment and an epitome of its history. On them are borne the battle honours and badges granted to the Regiment in commemoration of its gallant deeds from the time it was raised.

The British had their *chota hazri* soon after *reveille*[9] lying lazily in bed, a colonial habit, sipping tea and nibbling at a banana or a biscuit. They later sat solemnly around the breakfast table, glum and speechless, looking like dummies and hiding behind their newspapers.

Then, there was in the battalion the institution of 'orderly officer' known as the orderly dog. He played a mug's game on the day of his duty and had to mount and inspect the quarter guard, stores and all sorts of other things, including latrines, from almost dawn to well past midnight.

Military habits like riding, boxing, athletics, polo, cricket and hockey were encouraged. Horse and dog racing were accepted as were occasional visits to the theatre and cinemas. Dancing was permitted in small doses. None of these could, however, be at the expense of regimental activity. All form of civilian recreation was

9 Reveille was one of the many bugle calls in regimental life. In olden days commanders in the field communicated their orders through the medium of music calls on bugles (drums and trumpet).

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considered 'sissy' and was taboo.

I was put in command of 6 Platoon in B Company and was supposed to know its strength, class composition, particulars of its men, and was expected to set a high example to them in personal conduct and all other fields. This was an exhilarating experience. In an endeavour to achieve this aim, I felt full of purpose and importance.

We were expected to do better than the men we commanded in everything; be smarter in marching, give better words of command and excel them in shooting and games. The unit held the boxing championship of India and here I was, never having boxed in my life. I thought this was not good enough and so one day, I took courage in both hands and went in the ring to learn this sport, lest anyone under-rated my 'toughness'. I was bashed about like a shuttle-cock in the beginning by my sparring partners, and often had a bloody nose but kept a stiff upper lip and kept boxing off and on till the end of my stay with this battalion.

Most officers rode bicycles. The Commanding Officer sometimes had a car, more often than not a rickety second-hand affair, worth probably not more than a thousand rupees. One day I bought a motor cycle and drove into the mess compound merrily at breakfast time. On hearing its noise, the Commanding Officer rushed out of the dining room, holding in his hand an unfinished newspaper, livid with rage and shouted: 'With whose permission have you acquired this contraption?'

I did not quite know what sacrilege I had committed.

'I never want to see you again riding this damn thing, do you hear? If you want to ride, get a horse instead.'

There could be no further argument, not in those days. This was how discipline was instilled.

The Commanding Officer asked me one day to accompany him on a duck shoot. I told him I did not like killing harmless birds and animals unless they were a

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menace to human life, such as a man-eating tiger or a wild boar. The Colonel gave me a dirty look and went on this 'shoot' alone.

We had to call on distinguished individuals in accordance with a special list which had been drawn up by the battalion and which included the 'right' type of British and Indian civil and military dignitaries.

Regimental life began in the morning on the range or with drill; you then went to the office, checked men's conduct sheets, musketry results, leave, clothing, crime, and honours and awards. You also scrutinized their kit and played games, apart from having meals in the mess.

During summer, everyone had to observe hot weather precautions as the British were terrified of catching the sun or of contracting a tropical disease. They religiously boiled their drinking water, wore a huge sola hat, kept themselves cool with plenty of ice, rolled down their sleeves after the sun went down and used a mosquito net in bed.

On most Saturdays I invited my old teacher, Brij Lal, to have a meal with me. He was the one who had pushed a hundred-rupee note into my hand when I was on my way to Sandhurst, as a token of his good wishes. When I came back to India, I asked him, in gratitude, what I could do for him. He said there was nothing he wanted in life except to drink to the dregs. He had taken to this way of life as a result of many disenchantments. I took him at his word. We kept meeting thus till I left the British Regiment at the end of the year and went away to the distant North West frontier. Though I kept him company as a drinking mate, he accepted my 'watery' habits.

At the onset of hot weather, the battalion, like many foreigners, went up to a hill station. We went to Dagshai, seven miles from Kasauli. Here we had to do, apart from other things, stiff 'khud' (uphill) races frequently, covering

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an ascent of nearly two thousand feet, to keep ourselves fit. I found these marathon affairs so gruelling that in the strain to win them, I sometimes spat blood.

When I was in Dagshai, Haksar was stationed as a probationer in the Indian Civil Service at Kasauli. He and I had been together in college. His sister, Dhan Raj Kishori, two years younger than I, lived with him. She was a beautiful girl endowed with many qualities. I soon got to know her well and always sought her company. I went to Kasauli as often as I could. As the return trip from Dagshai was fourteen miles, it meant either coming in a taxi which was beyond my means or walking on my flat feet all this distance, in mountainous terrain. I had to choose the latter course by force of circumstances. The trip going up during daylight hours was all right but the journey back was a different proposition. I used to return fairly late, usually well past midnight, along the fringe of a thick forest. It was a frightening experience at the dead of the night. When I asked Haksar one day if I could marry his sister, he first told me she was likely to be engaged to a playmate but a few months later he said she would, on reconsideration, be glad to accept my proposal.

As a Second Lieutenant I drew a monthly salary of four hundred and fifty rupees. From this amount I had to pay a mess bill, keep up appearances as an officer in a British Regiment as also pay regularly a hundred and fifty rupees to my mother for making both ends meet. She and I therefore had a tough time living. My life was austere and excluded all luxuries. What with the cost of medicines for my ailing mother, education of my brothers and sister and their routine expenditure, I found that my financial commitments were going above my head. I was driven to take a sizeable loan from a money-lender at an exorbitant rate of interest. This transaction became a bugbear to me for years to come.

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I saw life from close quarters in this battalion. Indians faced a difficult position those days. They were contemptuously referred to as WOGS (Westernized Oriental Gentlemen) and kept at an arm's length by the British. We had to fight for our existence. Some made our number by dint of merit and others through docility.

The British mixed with their own tribe mostly, living in a water-tight compartment. They drew good salaries, bought everything British, lived in spacious bungalows with their families, had many inexpensive servants such as a bearer, a *khansama,* a *masalchi,* a *bhisti,* a *mehtar* and an *ayah.* They had to do neither their own cooking nor their own washing, as in England.

Each morning the 'saheb' went on parade, while the 'memsaheb' played bridge or mah-jongg or indulged in coffee or gossip, a habit which Indian ladies acquired in later years. They had a snooze in the afternoon, went religiously to the club for a drink or for a swim and often slept through the movies after dinner. On the whole, therefore, they had a jolly good time but loved to pose as martyrs. They thought India was too hot, full of flies and mosquitoes, dirt, disease, and where, on the whole, the conditions of living were difficult, a dreary colonial existence.[10] They also found fault with the habits of our people, their illiteracy, their way of life and their general backwardness. All this was to convince themselves that they were out here on a mission. In condemning India in various ways, they were really trying to justify and preserve the British Raj in India which they made themselves believe had been established for the good of an uncivilized people. They thought what they said was gospel and what nationalist Indians did was sedition. They scoffed at those who ever talked of a free India, as if it were heresy to say so. But as Burke said long ago, 'I do not know a method by which to indict a whole people.'

10 But who invited them to come here?

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I was the only Indian serving in this British battalion, consisting of about thirty officers and seven hundred men. On more than one occasion, I had heated arguments with fellow British officers who argued in favour of the inevitability and the benevolence of the British Raj in India owing to our illiteracy, poverty, superstitions and the other ways in which we were backward. I, on the other hand, took the stand that we had these weaknesses due to foreign rule which could never be justified and that, in any case, we should be allowed our inherent right to govern ourselves. For this attitude I was branded by some of my compatriots and also the Englishmen as 'politically inclined'.

A little before the end of my probationary period with the East Surreys, I had to nominate the Indian regiment in which I wished to serve. I put in for the 5th Battalion (Napiers) of the 6th Rajputana Rifles,[11] as it had a fine tradition and a galaxy of battle honours to its credit. Serving in a rifle regiment was considered a distinction because it had a smart uniform and mess kit, marched at a faster pace, had special ceremonials and a distinguished history. I was lucky to be accepted by this fine battalion, stationed amidst the rugged mountains of Waziristan in Razmak.

The British had conveyed an impression to the Indian ranks that the Indian officer was perhaps sectarian in outlook and might be partial to them in promotion, welfare and in other respects, unlike the 'sahebs' who were so 'just and impartial'. The rank and file, therefore, greeted us rather apprehensively. They also wondered if we could compete in all respects with our foreign counter-

11 'Rifle' Regiments dated back to 1775 and had the right to hold the left of the line and march at 140 paces to the minute.

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parts, since they had never seen an Indian on equal terms with a 'saheb'. We had to work extremely hard and under great provocation, to do well. The myth of British superiority started to disappear in the Indian regiments as Indianization progressed till it exploded altogether in World War II, in the field of battle, where we proved our mettle.

Although this was an Indian battalion, speaking in our own tongue was discouraged in the mess as also putting on Indian music on the radio or eating Indian curries, except on special days. Conversation circled around sports and other non-controversial subjects. We had four dinner nights a week on which dining in the mess was compulsory for all and during which the Regimental Pipe band went around us as we dined. We were not allowed to talk 'shop'[12] or mention ladies' names in any context and had to stand drinks all round if we ever violated this rule. I distinctly remember that whilst I and a few other Indians, in extreme minority, used to argue for our nationalist cause or in support of our national leaders, many of our compatriots who rose later to occupy the highest military posts, during frequent discussions in the mess and elsewhere, poured unwarranted and critical comment on our national leaders like Gandhi and Nehru and praised British Raj and personalities just to please their masters and earn cheap popularity. Macaulay had probably foreseen this type when he said 130 years ago:

> We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, words and intellect.

Those who did not fall in with such flattery and showed

12 Any talk relating to our work.

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'misguided' independence of spirit, drew the wrath of British officers and sometimes had to suffer 'dire consequences'.

As the proportion of the Indian to the British officers increased in the battalion, the atmosphere steadily improved, from our point of view. But during this transitionary period, the Indian officer usually played up to the British and let down his own countrymen through jealousy, backbiting and intrigue. This divided us as a team and resembled the pattern which existed in India as a whole at this period.

I was going from Lahore to Rawalpindi escorting my mother. As I tried to board a first class compartment, I found it bolted from inside. When I banged at the door, an Englishwoman branded a threatening fist from behind the closed glass panes of the windows, waving me off and refusing to open the door. I was furious at this affront and called up the Indian station master to have the compartment opened. When he did fetch up, he was mortally afraid of ordering about a 'memsab'. I remained adamant and, by creating a scene, which attracted a large crowd —always an anethema to the British—had the door of this compartment opened. The 'memsab' looked crestfallen and had to give in at last. It was common practice in those days for the British not to let us travel with them, as Indian company was generally obnoxious to them.

Our Commanding Officer was Lt Col Ferguson, a cranky Scotsman who lived in his own world. He was an old-stager and insisted—among other things—that junior officers should spend a part of their leave in Rajasthan to which State most men in the regiment belonged. When he withheld someone's leave, he said, 'Leave is a privilege, not a right.'

As a junior subaltern in that battalion I was entrusted with all the thankless tasks. For instance, I was appointed the third member of the mess, battalion accounts officer

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and the sports officer, all at the same time. Ferguson told me that the battalion must win in hockey and athletics in the Waziristan championship that year. 'If not,' he warned, 'you will get a bowler hat.' After sweating blood for months on end with these teams, I proudly presented to my Commanding Officer the prizes he had sought. In recognition, I was appointed officiating Quartermaster in place of Umrao Singh when he went on leave. The latter guided me in all activities in the battalion including regimental customs.

When I heard mother had to undergo a kidney operation, I was anxious to be present by her side. But as I was always 'broke', I was on the horns of a dilemma, wondering how I could make this trip. Going from Razmak to Lahore for me was like going from Moscow to London. Umrao[13] came to my rescue and at once placed his Morris car at my disposal with a full tank of fuel, his driver and made other arrangements for this trip and back.

Razmak was a military outpost located in the heart of Waziristan on our North West Frontier. The two principal tribes in this part of the world are Mahsuds and Afridis. Officers were sent in turn to command the 'Alexandra Picquet,' a post seven miles from Razmak, for one month at a time. The Post Commander led a solitary life for these thirty days, keeping a watchful eye for hostiles on the horizon all around. He learnt many things in this command. His life resembled that on a lighthouse with boundless ocean and dangerous sharks all round. Here he was surrounded by forbidden territory and inhospitable tribesmen. Any false move on the part of his men would attract Mahsud bullets with which the tribesmen were very free and which they fired without compunction. They made good friends but formidable foes and held

13 Umrao Singh, eighteen months senior to me, taught me Regimental customs, presented me with a new camera when mine was lost and did me many other good turns.

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life on the palms of their hands. They staked it easily for women and disputes of land and hereditary feuds among their clans. They were sworn enemies of the British as they sorely resented the latter usurping their land and liberty and intruding upon their privacy. They, therefore, gave them no quarter and expected none in return. In addition to the picquets, our units went on flag marches, known as 'columns', for several days at a stretch deep into Pathan territory and armed to the teeth. There were skirmishes during these columns at times but they were uneventful on the whole. I went on many of them and came under fire more than once, learning much I never forgot.

I learnt Pushto and read its elementary reader *Hagha-Dagha* in the process. It was great fun learning this language which came easy to me as I knew both Urdu and some Persian.

In Waziristan, one endured physical stress and austere living, had ample opportunity to show grit and resolve, in the face of dangerous situations, organize men at short notice skilfully and under trying and hazardous circumstances, without guidance. So a young officer went through a unique experience here which stood him in good stead in later life.

To the British, Razmak, apart from being a military garrison, was really the spearhead of their Empire. Here they sat defending their King and country and felt expansive on their perch. They put one tribe against the other, subverting them with money and guile. The theory of 'divide and rule' was practised with a vengeance. As many Indians played up to this technique in India, so did tribesmen here. But the bulk remained true to their land and fought ceaselessly for their liberty, as did the Indians. India became free but the Pathan is still fighting for his freedom. His ordeal has been much longer. Liberty can be denied for some time but not for ever.

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I took full interest in most activities of my battalion. Subedars Amir Ali and Jawana Ram taught me special rifle drill of this battalion which was different from that of an ordinary unit. There were many significant words of command and drill movements. For instance, instead of 'B Company, Attention' you said, 'Eyes Front-B Company' and so on. You carried arms at the trail instead of the shoulder. You marched at a hundred and forty paces instead of hundred and twenty. There was the docile Subedar Din Singh, a dear old man who always said: *Thik Hai, Hazoor* (Very well, Sir) to everything the Commanding Officer said. Once the latter rode up to where Din Singh was in charge of a parade of field firing. In broken Hindustani, the Commanding Officer shouted: 'Din Singh.... machine-gun...chhe ungal...Samajhte? F....Sshshsh.' It meant: 'Din Singh, raise your machine-gun by six inches, understand? Get moving!' Din Singh at once said: 'Thik hai, Hazoor,' without understanding a word. When I told Din Singh after the Commanding Officer had left that I had understood nothing of what the Colonel had just said, he admitted, nor had he, but it was never safe to question a Commanding Officer and always better to say, 'Yes, sir' to anything he said rather than ask questions. He assured me that there was never any come-back then.

The British were supposed to understand the susceptibilities of the Indians. Yet, they used to slip up on this point every now and then. For instance, in Razmak they once posted a Hindu guard from our regiment over a butchery, in which cows were slaughtered for issue of meat to British and Muslim troops. Guarding the killing of 'sacred' cows naturally infuriated the Hindus in our battalion. They selected a sentry one day who, on instigation, shot dead several butchers from his sentry post. This incident created a stir in the regiment but could have been averted by discreetly posting aMuslim or British guard over the butchery. The culprit was, of course, tried by a court martial and hanged.

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Kenneth Guy was our Second-in-Command. He was an 'old woman' in many ways and despised by all. He was a nuisance in the mess and on parade, always pulling up junior officers for having their hands in the pockets or smoking when they were speaking to seniors or finding some other fault in their general behaviour. Our Commanding Officer could not stand his sight. He eventually came to a sticky end by retiring as a Major and was re-employed in the Viceregal Lodge as Comptroller of the Household.

I fell into disgrace one evening when I went into the mess along with a colleague and played what I thought was a prank. I stood opposite the life-size painting of General Sir Charles Napier, the founder of my battalion. Coming to attention, in jest, I began ticking him off. He wore a long beard and a uniform which was tattered. Like the Regimental Sergeant Major at Sandhurst, I roared at this dignitary's painting: 'Mr. Napier! You need a hair-cut. Your turn-out is shocking and your blue patrol is torn. Two extra parades for this slackness! Wake up, M-I-S-T-E-R Napier.' I thought it was a great joke but froze with fear when I discovered that Kenneth Guy had sneaked in from the back door and had heard all the blasphemy I had uttered. He was naturally fuming at his mouth with anger and swore he would have me out of the battalion for this *fau paux*.

'What cheek for a puppy!' he said, 'to yap at such a great man.'

I will never forget the rap I got on my knuckles for this tomfoolery, which I deserved.

Our regimental tailors were Leach and Weborney. We had to get our mess kit made from them and no one else as only they knew our correct regimental pattern. I was going to place an order for mine with them when my friend Kirpal said he had just had his made by Pitman who, according to him, was as good a tailor as Leach and Weborney. The latter

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was located in Delhi which was so far away, and Pitman was in Lahore which was so much nearer. It would be much less of a bother, he advised. I took this unwise counsel and got mine made by Pitman. I wore it proudly on the next guest night in the mess and happened to sit, for my sins, next to Major Guy. Apart from being Second-in-Command, he was also President, Mess Committee and responsible for the correctness of our mess clothes. He gazed at my new 'acquisition' for a second and snapped:

'Where did you get this mess kit made?'

'P-p-p-itman, sir!' I stammered.

'Pitman? Who the hell is he? Never heard of him!'

'He is an excellent tailor, sir...'

'You damn well know our regimental tailors are Leach and Weborney and no one else. Who told you to go to an unauthorized tailor?'

'No one, sir....'

'Then, I order you to get another mess kit made from Leach and Weborney at the earliest. And you will show me both so that I can check up.'

'Y-e-s, sir...' I stammered.

I had asked for it and there was no escape from a situation like this.

The Subedar Major enjoyed a position of great prestige in the battalion. He had rendered distinguished service both in peace and war and wielded considerable influence among the rank and file. If the Commanding Officer wanted to do anything in the battalion, he consulted the Subedar Major first as to its possible repercussions on all ranks. He was the right-hand man of the Commanding Officer and consequently was given conspicuous respect by all.

Keily's father had commanded our battalion in olden days and was its Colonel-in-Chief, a coveted post in each regimental group. Keily, apart from being the Senior Subaltern, therefore, held a special position in the bat-

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talion. He nearly lost his commission, however, when he once slipped up on protocol. He was rude to the Subedar Major, which was never, never done. The Subedar Major, not used to being addressed harshly, grew red in the face, took off his belt and threw it in front of the Commanding Officer, volunteering to go into retirement at once, if officers of the battalion were going to treat him shabbily. The Colonel calmed him down, had Keily up and threatened to have him removed from the service. Keily survived only after tendering an unqualified apology both to the Commanding Officer and to the Subedar Major and beat a hasty retreat from the orderly room, with his tail between the legs. This was the way the image of the Subedar Major used to be maintained.

In building up the Indian army's traditions, the Jawan has played as important a part as anyone else by his devotion to duty and legendary loyalty. He is a delightful fellow, his simplicity of character and his obedience invariably endearing him to those under whom he serves. He gives his best to his regiment and to the army and in return asks for minor concessions such as spells of leave other than those to which he is entitled, to settle many of his domestic affairs which at times exigencies of service do not permit. In his utter simplicity and not realizing that many others like him are doing something similar, only in a more sophisticated way, he tries to impress his superiors with the urgency of his claim for leave by arranging to have a cooked up telegram sent to his unit which reads something as follows: 'House fallen, buffalo dead, condition serious. Come soon.'

This is a combination of calamities, he thinks, the presentation of which to his superiors in one breath, is bound to move their gentler feelings. But the latter are amused to detect a familiar ring, see through this ruse and deal with each such case on its merits.

Major 'Pete' Rees, a British officer, was commanding C

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Company in my battalion. He was a short-statured British officer with marked features and personality. He had outstanding military knowledge and was clear and concise in his speech. When I first met him in November 1934 he was just short of forty but looked much younger. He had endless energy and was physically tough as a nail. He had Spartan habits and was a teetotaller. He was a good sportsman and a mountaineer. He had won a D.S.O. and M.C. with bar in action for gallantry. He also wore a C.I.E. which he had earned for distinguished service in peace. Nothing was impossible for him. If he made a promise once, he stood by it at all costs. He was truthful and god-fearing. He was sound in his judgment and was loved by his men. His devotion to duty was proverbial. He was generous, warmhearted and had a soul of fire. He possessed courage and compassion and was a ruthless disciplinarian. He was impartial and never wavered in doing justice. He had initiative and boundless determination. He despised red tape and never allowed it to fetter his authority. He respected all our customs and religions alike. He was my idol and I tried to emulate his example throughout my professional life.

He played an important role in the battalion so far as I was concerned. He often rolled into my room at night and spoke to me at length about tactics, military history and other regimental matters. Once he asked what I did on holidays and on most evenings. I told him after playing games I listened to the radio, an innovation in those days, and also read fiction. He was amazed to find that I was spending no time in improving my military knowledge when I had the opportunity to do so. He told me that after labouring for twenty years in trying to learn his profession, he still felt comparatively ignorant and shuddered to think what my fate would be like after twenty years, without concentrating on my job. I would, he warned, be able to boast of only a wasted life on puerile pastimes such as

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listening to radios or reading fiction. This argument made much sense to me and from that day on I took to my professional studies seriously. I had just over a year's service then. Apart from studying tactics and military history, I also took to going through the lives of great military leaders like Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, Kemal Ataturk and Lawrence of Arabia.

He once asked me to accompany him on an all-night, non-stop march around the Razmak Camp, whilst I was commanding B Company. We both walked about fifteen miles at a stretch, with heavy kit bags on our backs, to test our endurance for ten hours without a break, at 7,000 feet above sea level. This is how he set an example. Rees was what a senior officer should be and unlike many of his compatriots who came out here merely to build an Empire rather than to serve the people.

I got a telegram from mother, asking me to send two thousand rupees which she required for a major operation. I took a portion of this sum on loan from a private source and raised the balance by selling, for a song, some of my few belongings such as a gramophone, a carpet and some other items. When my Commanding Officer heard that I had taken a loan from a private source, he reminded me that it was against military rules to do so. I told him respectfully that whereas I was aware of this rule I knew of no convention which prohibited a son coming to his mother's aid in grave distress. My British Commanding Officer must have appreciated this reply because he eventually granted me a loan from the regimental funds which not only allowed me to pay back the money I had borrowed from elsewhere but also to take good care of my mother during and after her operation.

Mother remained constantly ill thereafter and as more and more money was required for her treatment, in addition to that for her maintenance, despite the specified sum I sent

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to her as monthly allowance, she began incurring debts. Her creditors therefore began making pressing demands on her and then on me for the settlement of their dues. If I continued helping her, as I had resolved to do, and pay her debts I had to somehow augment my present means. The only way I could do this legitimately was by transferring my services to a better paid assignment, which meant leaving my battalion. At the same time, I was anxious to remain in the Rajputana Rifles in which I was doing not too badly. I was, therefore, on the horns of a dilemma. Remaining in and departing from the battalion seemed equally imperative for different reasons. I fought against this conflicting situation but filial sentiment won the day in the end. I, therefore, willy-nilly, applied, in accordance with a notice in an Army Order, for Extra Regimental Employment with either the Frontier Scouts, Burma Military Police or the Army Service Corps, all of which carried additional monetary allowances. As no Indians were allowed in the first two, I was accepted by the Army Service Corps. This was a double-edged weapon because if it meant better pay, it also meant giving up the Rajputana Rifles. On the day I had to leave the battalion, I wavered and wanted to call the whole thing off. But many friends who were familiar with my domestic affairs counselled me not to change my mind. When I was being dined out in my regimental mess, I had a heavy heart and pledged to come back to infantry as soon as it became possible for me to do so. It was under these compelling circumstances that I left the Infantry, to whose fold I returned as soon as circumstances and authorities permitted.[14]

I went to Rawalpindi on a three month course and was married there in November 1936 at the age of twenty-four and half years. My wedding was unostentatious, unlike

14 Since I left the battalion, I made several attempts to come back to it or the Infantry over a period of years.

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most weddings in this country. Both sides had agreed to cut all frills. My wife was nicknamed Dhanno. Her beauty was dazzling and her habits simple and adorable. She was deeply religious. A day or two after my wedding, we had to give a forty-five minute lecture, in the class, on current affairs. A young British colleague, recently married, felt too lazy to prepare this lecture himself and sought his young bride's aid in this matter. She burnt midnight oil, prepared the talk and made him mug it up by heart. He thought he had got it taped, but the next morning, when he got up in the class, to say his piece, his memory stood still and he forgot all he had to say.

'Gentlemen,' he stammered, 'last night, both my wife and I knew this lecture. But this morning, unfortunately, only she knows it.'

The whole class roared with laughter. The irate Commanding Officer, however, did not. This poor officer had to catch the next train back to his unit in disgrace.

From Rawalpindi I went to Jabalpur. Brigadier Lockhart was commanding the station and Major McCay was his Brigade Major. The former was from the Sikh Regiment and the latter from Rajputana Rifles. They were both excellent officers and I enjoyed serving under them. Lockhart later rose to be India's Commander-in-Chief and McCay retired as a Major General.

I was now twenty-five. It is human nature that a young man of my age should want to live decently and in relative comfort, at some stage; for instance, owning a car of sorts, a radio, a refrigerator, see a movie occasionally, be able to return others' hospitality and entertain a little, take a spot of leave and have an odd drink in the evenings (being a teetotaller, this was not my problem). Since my father's death, seven years ago, I had been denying myself these and other pleasures of life, in order to support my mother. In fact at times I had to think twice before I saw a movie. I possessed no refrigerator, no radio, no car and could seldom afford to

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entertain. There is a limit beyond which no one can go. So in sheer desperation, I decided one day to buy a cheap second-hand car. I went to the Bombay Garage and picked up an old Wolseley Hornet for nine hundred rupees and that also on credit. Although I barely knew how to drive, I had the cheek to sit in the car as if I were an expert driver, asked the dealer to explain to me the starter and other gadgets and shakily drove off. The engine coughed, my hands shook and the steering-wheel went out of control. I had a minor accident before I left the premises of the Garage. The car was repaired the next day and I steadily improved my driving on this old crock. This was in keeping with the way I had learnt swimming and riding in my childhood.

From Jabalpur I was posted in 1938 to 11 Brigade at Ahmednagar under Brigadier McPherson of the Jat Regiment, of which I was to be, in later years, the Colonel Commandant. The headquarters of our brigade was located in the Ahmednagar Fort where our national leaders were imprisoned during the war years. Whilst I was stationed here, whenever I could, on holidays, I took the opportunity of visiting various areas where Shivaji—a legendary hero—had fought many battles and won immortal fame 300 years ago.

The Army was being mechanized in 1939 and animals were partially replaced by machines, horses by tanks and mules by lorries. I was appointed an instructor in a mechanization team under the auspices of the Armoured Fighting Vehicles School. Our Commanding Officer, Lt Col Shelton, was a tough nut and worked from about sun-rise to sun-set with a fifteen-minute break for lunch during which we quickly 'munched' our cold sandwiches. He died a few months later due to over-work and, I believe, a lack of sense of humour.

I heard that my sister was seriously ill in Kashmir. I, there-

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fore, rushed up to Srinagar, a distance of thirteen hundred miles and found that my sister, Nanni, had tuberculosis of the bone in the toe of her left foot, which was swollen up and in pain. After much running around in Srinagar and fearing that her trouble might get worse, I decided (against the advice of the local doctors who thought they could cure her in Srinagar) to take her to Lahore where far better medical facilities were available. I also thought that instead of swaying in a situation like this, I should act without delay, get the most expert advice and the best treatment. I therefore dumped her in my car and after a long and laborious journey by road from Srinagar, I brought her to Lahore where the doctors decided that she should undergo an operation at once. After expert surgery, Doctor Pasricha saved her foot but had to amputate a part of her infected toe.

The usual period of convalescence then followed during which I stayed, for about ten days, in her small ward, with special permission, sleeping at night on the floor near her, as there was no room for an extra bed. As her amputated toe did not heal up satisfactorily, I had to take her to Delhi in quest of another surgeon. After protracted treatment, she recovered completely. I could ill-afford her treatment but was determined to get her out of the woods.

I used to play occasional pranks during these days and will cite two examples here. Lieutenant Mohammed Musa—Pakistan Army's Commander-in-Chief lately—was a Subaltern in the 6/13 Frontier Force Rifles. He was a good soldier and deeply religious. Each morning, like a good Pathan, he prayed before embarking upon his work. Three of us got together one day, Kanahayya Atal, Shaukat and I, all lieutenants, advanced our watches, by design, by five hours, and woke Musa up when it was just midnight.

'What is the time?' he asked, rubbing his eyes.

'It is five o'clock in the morning, Musa,' we lied, 'time for prayers.'

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He looked at his watch, found it was midnight and looked at us dubiously. We showed him our watches in turn, which were all within five minutes of each other and showed five o'clock or so. He jumped out of his bed, thinking his watch was wrong and it was, in fact, time for his morning prayers. We stayed away patiently in the verandah. But when he found it was pitch dark, long after his prayers, when it should be broad day-light, according to his new time, he felt suspicious.

'What the hell is the matter, chaps?' he shouted, throwing one of his riding boots at us half-jestingly.

Not a word from any of us.

'What *is* the time just now?' he inquired.

'Half an hour after midnight, Musa,' we confessed.

Rusi Billimoria,[15] or Billi as we called him fondly, of 7 Cavalry, and I were once going to catch a train from Hyderabad to Delhi where we were proceeding on leave. He had given me a lift up to the station. We were a little late on arrival and the train had already started pulling out. Billi was calm, whilst I was excited, as the train slipped away under my nose. But as the guard got ready to jump into his cabin, waving his green light, Billi and I rushed up and held him back firmly by both arms, purring softly to him, 'You can't leave us behind, Bud.' Billi then suddenly put his arms around the guard and held him tightly. The guard was taken aback and promptly waved the red light. The train stopped. Crowds assembled. Pandemonium prevailed. We were in trouble but we managed to catch the train. When we came back from leave, we were both run up before the Brigade Commander for an act which amounted to a serious breach of discipline. The Brigadier first called us all the names under the sun but let us off in the end and had a big laugh.

15 These incidents are mentioned here for convenience though the chronological order of their occurrence relates to slightly different periods.

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The Transition

All the changes and chances of mortal life.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

WHEN MY wife and I were seeing an English movie in Poona on 3 September 1939, there was an interruption and a grim announcement :

Ladies and Gentlemen : we regret to announce that Great Britain and Germany are at war with each other from today.

So World War II had begun. There was a hush in the hall and commotion all over. No one knew what was happening. Confusion reigned supreme. All sorts of rumours were afloat as they always are in times of war. I reported for duty to my Commanding Officer and was ordered to proceed forthwith to Secunderabad to mechanize 5 Division. I was a Senior Subaltern and was put in charge of an assignment which usually went to a Major. This was flattering though usual during war when you performed jobs above your rank due to shortage of officers. During this work, I came in close touch with Maj Gen 'Piggy' Heath, Commander, 5 Division, Brigadier 'Mo' Mayne, who was commanding a Brigade, Colonel 'Frank' Messervy, who was our Grade I Staff Officer and Colonel

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'Reginald' Savoury,[1] the A/Q. When I finished this job, after a few months, Messervy asked me, as did Mayne, what they could do for me. I asked them if I could get back to my battalion or, alternatively, accompany 5 Division to the Middle East Theatre. They tried but the Military Secretary at Army Headquarters would not play. I then asked for a transfer to the 6/13 Frontier Force Rifles, commanded by Lt Col Russel (Pasha) at the time; but the higher authorities did not oblige and I was once again frustrated in my attempt to get back to infantry. But I kept trying.

After mechanizing the 5 Division, I went in March 1940 to Deolali as Adjutant of a Motor Battalion's Training Centre, under Lt Col Sheehan, an Irishman and a hard taskmaster. It was an education, working under him. After a spell as an instructor in a non-commissioned officers' school at Saugor, I was nominated to a war course at the Staff College, Quetta, early in 1942. This was a fine institution and was commanded by a first class British officer, Maj Gen 'Jeff' Evans, D.S.O.

Akbar Khan and I had been contemporaries at Sandhurst and were now together at Quetta. Although he and I were friendly to the individual Englishman, we were far from well disposed towards his 'Empire' in India. One of our class-mates there was, however, more loyal to the British than perhaps their King himself and reported against our political views[2] to the British head of the Intelligence Bureau of Baluchistan. But, as chance would have it, one of Akbar's friends, who was on the latter's personal staff, told us who had done this. Akbar went to the culprit later that night and put him to shame for letting down two of his compatriots to an Englishman

1 Both Masservy and Savoury became celebrities later.

2 If one was a nationalist in those days, one was automatically labelled as anti-British. Strange logic!

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surreptitiously. He could never live this down with us.

In February 1942, H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* were sunk by the Japanese and soon after Singapore fell. This came as a great blow to the British prestige in India (when people saw that the 'Saheb' could be defeated by Asians). Although as Indians we were anxious to win the war against the Germans and the Japanese, we were equally anxious to have the British out of India so that we could be an Independent country. We, therefore, held the view that the weaker they grew politically and militarily, the sooner would they leave India. This turned out to be right in the end.

When we heard of the British reverses in Malaya and Africa, Akbar invited five selected British and Indian officers on what was called a round-table debate on this occasion. The subject was : Why should the British not quit India? Heated arguments followed on both sides and the meeting dispersed late in the night, everyone departing in the end as the best of friends.[3]

From Quetta I went to Karachi as an Instructor in the Intelligence School. Both at the Staff College and at the Intelligence School, I, among others, was invited to write critical papers on a particular aspect of our army, at the instance of the Commanding Officers of these two institutions. My views in these papers did not meet with the approval of certain higher authorities. I was, therefore, pulled up by the Army Headquarters in Delhi and warned to watch my step. At the same time, as I had chosen to find fault with the publicity policy of the British in one of the papers, referred to above, I was posted under Brigadier Ivor Jehu in the Public Relations Branch of the Army Headquarters in Delhi and told to serve in that department and improve what I had criticized if I could.

3 Although the fact that such a meeting was held was reported to our British Commandant by some of our compatriots.

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I had gone[4] to Bombay to play cricket for Sir Roger Lumley, the British Governor and also to meet a girl named Valsa Mathai, a revolutionary leader who was about 19 years of age. I met her through a common friend. During our first encounter, she cast aspersions on my patriotism because I was serving in an Army which took orders from the British. I resented her attitude and told her I claimed to love my country as much as she and that she did not have the monopoly to do so exclusively. Soon after this altercation with her, she dared me to address a students' anti-British rally which I did and at which I spoke on the need of youngmen coming forward to join the war effort and its significance in the future free India. During this speech, I expressed many nationalist sentiments publicly which amounted to 'sedition' from the British point of view. Though the Governor liked me as a cricketer, I was told he was considerably exercised by and took grave exception to this speech, the gist of which was reported to him through his staff. Beresford Pierse also took me to task for this 'indiscretion'. Valsa was pleased with my performance and at how I had braved this minor ordeal and hence I could do no wrong after this incident so far as she was concerned. She came to see me late one night and asked me to get a secret wireless transmitter repaired. She also told me that the police were after her and the wireless station from which beamed many unauthorized nationalist broadcasts against the British. An Indian army mechanic whom I knew locally came, on the quiet, 'to do his bit' for his country and put this transmitter in order. I was involved in a few other escapades with Valsa in the underground movement and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

One day I heard from a friend of mine in Bombay—that Achut Patwardhan, the renowned rebel, who was abscond-

4 When the Quit India movement was at its height.

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ing at the time, was going to visit Frank Moraes, then a correspondent in the *Times of India*, late one night. I went to this rendezvous that night and managed to catch a glimpse of Achut on whose head the British had laid a heavy price. We then, heard that the police might raid his haunt. Achut therefore slipped away in a car to an unknown destination and we to our respective abodes.

General Sir Noel Beresford Pierse, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Command, Bangalore, was a British service officer who was new to this country and had no prejudices against India or Indians. By the latter part of 1942, I was promoted to the rank of acting Lieutenant Colonel[5] and posted on his staff in the Public Relations Branch. I found him unusually sympathetic towards our aspirations. When he asked, I told him that the British Raj in India could never be justified. It was like someone taking over the household of another, on the plea that it was in disorder. No one could exercise such a right or there would be no personal liberty in life. I also gave him instances of acts of discrimination by the British against the Indians in their day-to-day behaviour which were intolerable. I cited the instance of the Madras Club, which like many clubs elsewhere in India, refused to accept Indians as members. He at once took up the matter, accompanied me to Madras the next day and invited me to this club for a meal as a test case. This aroused a wave of resentment among the Europeans in Madras. He defied his compatriots wilfully till they raised a hue and cry to the British Governor of Madras, Sir Stanley

5 The only other Indian who held this rank at this time was Cariappa, who was thirteen years older than I in age and service. I was therefore not displeased with myself at this windfall. Cariappa, who later became free India's first Commander-in-Chief, was a pioneer in many ways. He has always been a good Indian, set a high example of personal conduct and seldom understood the intricacies of politics. He evolved a set of Do's and Don'ts in earlier days which remained a good guide for Indians till they gained some experience in the army. He wielded excellent influence on the army as a whole.

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Jackson. The latter, on finding the General uncompromising on this issue, reported him to the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, who pulled him up for trying to embarrass and upset the apple-cart of the British Administration in India. Beresford Pierse thus lost the first round in trying to help what he thought was a good cause.

Once a British colleague of mine and I were travelling together. When the train halted on a small wayside station, we saw from a distance a beggar wearing practically no clothes and reduced to a skeleton. My foreign companion drew my attention to him and warned: 'If we quit India, as demanded by you "wogs", and left its affairs to you, everyone would soon be reduced to this state of starvation.' 'We have only to thank the British Raj, which after two hundred years has brought us to this pass', I retorted, pointing at the same beggar. I also quoted to him what a Soviet writer, M. V. Mikheev had said in his travel article—'We went through India'—many years ago:

> For all our lives we will retain in our memory the pitiful sights of hungry people, with caved in chests, legs thin as sticks and ribs sticking through their skins and crippled by disease...

I also reminded my British friend that there was no substitute for liberty.

Beresford Pierse was sorry to hear stories like this. He wanted India to be free but was duly silenced by his superiors.

In Bangalore we lived next door to Mrinalini and Vikram Sarabhai. The former was a talented dancer and the latter a distinguished scientist. They both were staunch nationalists. I once heard they gave shelter to Minoo Masani,[6] a spirited young revolutionary, absconding and wanted by

6 He later joined the Swatantra Party.

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the police. The Sarabhai family, as a whole, were serving their country well.

About this time, Tom Treanor, an American war correspondent, and I took a trip together to Trivandrum and Cape Comorin in Kerala, where we were guests of the brilliant Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar, popularly known as 'C.P.', the State's Diwan. He was renowned for his wit and repartee. When Tom asked him how Travancore had such high percentage of literacy, he snapped :

'Do you know the difference between the meaning of the words literacy and education?'

'No, Sir', Tom lied.

'I will give you an analogy,' C.P. said. 'My mother knows her scriptures by heart but cannot read or write a word of any language. I call her highly educated but totally illiterate. Do you understand what I am saying?'

'No,' Tom confessed.

'My dear fellow,' C.P. went on, 'Lord Macaulay put a different emphasis on literacy in India than I do.'

Tom asked C.P. no more questions.

A few months later, Tom was killed[7] in war in the Middle East whilst covering the activities of the Allies for the *Los Angeles Times*, of which he was a correspondent. I had once promised to see him in his home town at Los Angeles. And here he was, dead and gone!

7 This reminds me of an incident in 1945 when another friend of mine —Wing Commander 'Jumbo' Majumdar—was killed gallantly in an air accident. As he had a distinguished war record, we hoped the British authorities would publicize how well Majumdar had served his country. Instead, to my disappointment, I found that his death was going almost unnoticed. I thought this was a bit hard and so decided to say a few words on the air in his eulogy. One had to obtain official approval for any public utterance, and not being sure that I would get it, I decided to broadcast without authority which Z. A. Bokhari, the All India Radio Director, sportingly allowed me to do. As was only to be expected, the British monitoring section at Delhi detected that I had broadcast, without authority (of the British) and praised an Indian who was not one of their blue-eyed boys. Both Bokhari and I had to do a bit of explaining.

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I met Maj Gen Rees again in late 1942, when he came back from the Middle East. He told me he was commanding an infantry division near Sollum, in Africa when he was asked to defend his position without sufficient resources. Rees expressed his inability to do so under the circumstances and the Corps Commander, in a fit of panic, relieved Rees of his command. Later events more than vindicated the stand Rees had taken on this occasion. It was not the first time that a gallant commander had been penalized unjustly in war. Rees, demoted to the rank of a Brigadier, was temporarily eclipsed and sidetracked in the Army Headquarters at Delhi as President of the Army Establishments Committee. In early 1943 he was posted as a Brigadier under Beresford Pierse and was later given command of 19 Division, when a Major General was 'fired' in an exercise near Madras. He made a dashing commander, remaining in the forefront of 19 Division when it re-captured Mandalay from the Japanese. His gallantry and personal leadership became well known.

Just before he went to Burma, I had many 'pow wows' with Rees once again. During these sittings late in the evenings, he used to discuss many matters of professional interest in the course of which he said it was essential to study the lives of commanders who had fought wars successfully. Night after night he related to me the exploits of many illustrious leaders including the illiterate Chengiz Khan, who conquered three powerful empires and drew a code of law for 50 nations. But when he unfolded the story of Lawrence of Arabia, I was enthralled.

Rees said Lawrence shaped his life as he willed and that no man was more faithful to his conscience than him. It was said that when he was to be decorated as a Commander of the Bath after the war, Lawrence refused this honour from the British King as he felt it was impossible for him to do so when Britain was about to dishonour the

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pledges he had given in her name to the gallant Arabs. Rees described Lawrence as a great scholar,[8] capable of infinite sacrifices, with a stout heart and boundless courage, had many narrow escapes from death, made light of his sufferings and whose name had become a part of history.

Rees believed that apart from other factors, luck played an important part in battle (though God seemed to be on the side of the more powerful armies). He said Napoleon, whilst considering a general for promotion, used to ask: is he lucky? Rees described war as a calculation of probabilities. He said generals had been accused of preparing for the last war and not the next. This compliment could be returned as statesmen prepared for no war at all! He said he took pride in the military profession as it meant living and, if necessary, dying in the defence of one's country.

I got orders to proceed on active service to Arakan in Burma in 1943.[9] I hurriedly packed up all sorts of nicknacks which I thought might come in handy to me in an emergency and said adieu to my wife and two children aged about three and one. I caught a boat from Calcutta and set sail for Chittagong. Everyone seemed hot and bothered on this boat. Some wore the excitement on their sleeves and others betrayed it by the way they paced

8 His *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* ranks amongst the greatest books in the English language.

9 During the course of my few months' attachment with Headquarters, Central Command, at Agra, in 1943 before I proceeded to Burma, I met Brigadier Wingate, when he was raising his 'hush-hush' long-range peneteration group called Chindits. When I asked him if I could serve with this force, and under his command, he told me there were no Indian troops under him except Gorkhas (who were not allowed to be commanded by Indian officers) and the only Indian officer he was taking with him was his P.R.O., Captain Katju (killed in action a few months later).

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up and down. We all knew we were going on no picnic. Rumours were rife that Japanese submarines had sunk many of our boats. So each time we spotted a dark object in the distant sea, we wondered if it was an enemy submarine.

Lt Col 'Brahm' Kapur, an old and dear friend, was also on this boat. One morning, as he and I stood on the upper deck gazing at the majestic sea, there was an alarm and everyone rushed to his post. An enemy submarine was chasing our boat and a hush hung upon us. Our escorting ships got busy and we never saw that submarine again.

I landed at Chittagong and took over command of a Motor Transport Regiment. My Adjutant was a French Canadian, Tommy Meauchamp, a smart, efficient and likeable officer. I had many other British officers under me. None gave me any trouble except a South African Major. He went up to his British superiors, over my head, and appealed that, he should not be commanded by an Indian. Instead of being punished for this indiscipline, they, in effect, upheld his request and transferred him to serve under a British officer elsewhere. Acts of discrimination like this against Indians were not unknown even in war.

My duties took me occasionally to Buthidaung, Maungdaw and other forward battle areas. One day, I was going in a jeep to Buthidaung, when I heard the drone of an aeroplane above me. As I was taking a turn on the road, a Japanese 'Zero' fighter made a bee-line towards my jeep. I pulled up with a jerk and jumped behind a shrub nearby. The fighter swooped down once or twice like a bird of prey, its guns firing off the mark and then went in quest of another target, thinking we had been dealt with. On another occasion, I was on my way to HQ 26 Division near Buthidaung when I was trapped in a counter bombardment passing through a British artillery position. Metal flew

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all over and whistling shells fell high and low.

In the same sector, a little later, I was going along a rough track which was littered with remnants of battered equipment of a recent battle. It was about half an hour after sunset. Suddenly the Japanese put in a surprise attack not far from this track. Not being very familiar with the terrain, I had some difficulty in extricating myself from this area in pitch dark.

I went to Maungdaw where a ding-dong battle was raging between us and the Japanese and met Major (the late General) K. S. Thimayya,[10] then S.G.O. 2 of 25 Infantry Division.

Pran Narang and I had been contemporaries in college. He was now commanding a Company in a Frontier Force Battalion located not far from Hill 555 in the Arakan. One day I met him on the eve of a battle and talked of many matters. We drifted into a discussion on war and how deeply it influences our life. We spoke about gallantry decorations which were not always awarded on merit. Some blue-eyed boys were given these awards at times without deserving them and some independent types, who had earned them, missed the boat occasionally. There were some, of course, who got them on merit. We ended up by agreeing it was largely a matter of chance. We then mentioned, in the passing, that there were people who had seen action, won gallantry decorations for bravery displayed whilst leading troops in war, seldom putting on airs; yet, how amusing it was to find others who had seen little or no action but had collected some gong (medal), by chance, blowing their own trumpet, as if they had been in the thick of it all. We also spoke about the psychology of fear in dangerous situations and agreed that everyone was afraid of dying, of mutilation of limbs and of pain.

10 Whose brother was fighting against us in the Indian National Army under Bose.

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Esprit de Corps and pride of professional tradition undoubtedly helped to tide over fear. Some betrayed their feelings and others did not. Those who said they had never been afraid were only indulging in 'bla-bla'.

Before I took leave of him, he said he looked forward to the holiday he was to have within the next few days and how he would love to spend it peacefully with his wife, away from all the din and noise. But as Shelley has said:

Our sincerest laughter
With pain is fraught.

In less than twenty-four hours, Pran was killed in the battle for Hill 555. No more battles for him and no leave! He was cremated by Subedar Amir Chand in the area Kanyiudan, which I visited a little later.

During my service in the Arakan, I went through hazards, hardships and other unpleasant situations which normally go with an operational area.

From the Arakan I came to Calcutta for a short time and then moved up to Simla late in 1945 as Assistant Adjutant General under General Sir Reginald Savoury at the Army Headquarters. There was scent of freedom in the air. Nehru had been recently released from jail after prolonged imprisonment and was coming up to Simla, for talks with the Viceroy. This news spread like wild fire. When he came, I went to look him up, along with my wife. We reached his residence with great difficulty as there was a sea of humanity jamming all its approaches. He greeted us warmly though briefly as many others besides us were eager to see him. When I saw him the next day, he asked me many questions about the war in Burma in which he knew I had participated and whether I knew anything about the Indian National Army led by Bose. I told him I

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had the misfortune of being among those who were pitted against this force in the Arakan,[11] where—at some points—Indians fought fellow Indians, under different flags. I thought that many had joined this force for patriotic reasons but there were exceptions also. I related to him all the privations they had suffered, how the Japanese neither equipped nor armed it adequately despite which handicap it had fought its way from Malaya to Assam. Although they were ultimately defeated by the British and Indian armies, they had managed to reach Indian soil in Kohima and kept up the pledge they had made with Bose to do so. I related to him the stirring tale of a particular Indian Havildar (Sergeant) of the INA—which I had heard from General Shah Nawaz—who swore to Bose before he left Singapore that he would one day set his foot on Indian soil with this 'army of liberation', even if it cost him his life. He then fought through the Burma campaign for all he was worth but, as ill luck would have it, as he reached the outskirts of Kohima, he was shattered by a shell. He lay mutilated in a pool of blood and in great agony, when Maj Gen Shah Nawaz of the Indian National Army happened to see him in this plight.

'Sir,' he groaned on seeing his Commander, 'you must go and tell Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose that I have kept my promise,' and then, kissing the Indian soil, he dropped down dead. I also told Nehru that the INA's official greeting was Jai Hind (Victory to India) and their motto : "*Jina hai to marna sikho,*" (If you wish to live, first learn to die).

Nehru was visibly moved to hear this story.

In 1946 the British put on trial by court martial in Delhi's historic Red Fort three INA officers, Shah Nawaz, Sehgal and Dhillon, a Muslim, a Hindu and a Sikh, on charges of

11 In 1944.

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treason and waging war against the King.

The Indian National Army[12] had been raised by Bose[13], the reputed Indian patriot, to bring about the speedy and complete overthrow of the British and to wrest freedom for India from them by force. No Indian worth his salt could ever have any doubt about Bose and his patriotism. He had caught the imagination of his people and had become a national hero. So, when he established a Provisional Indian Government in Malaya in 1943, most Indians wished him luck. (The INA was a closely knit family and had, for instance, a common kitchen for Hindus, Muslims and Christians, a feat which has not been achieved fully in the army even to this day.)

Andamans NOT Malaya.

Bose and his followers held the view that this force had emerged from amongst the prisoners of war whom many of their British officers had deserted in Malaya. They did not think it was corruption of army, discipline, loyalty or sense of duty, because it was raised to assist in winning independence for India. In fact, several minds in the Indian Army were exercised on this account. General Thimayya's brother and many of our friends were in the INA. They broadcast many messages—with telling effect—accusing us of fighting under a British flag whilst they were laying down their lives under the Indian tricolour and for Indian Independence.

Bose was the first Indian leader to establish command over a portion of the Armed Forces of India in the field under exceptional circumstances. So far as the loyalty of Indians to the British Crown was concerned, he established that it was not as imperishable as was generally believed. Thus, he destroyed one of the main props of the British rule in India. (The mutiny of the Indian Navy and the

12 Indian National Army had been raised from prisoners of war on some of whom the Japanese had inflicted many hardships and atrocities.

13 He is reported to have been killed in an air accident soon after the war.

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Air Force, in 1946, sounded the death-knell of the British who at last realized that they could not hold the Indians down with the help of Indian sailors, airmen or soldiers.) Bose also left no doubt on this point. The Japanese commanders recognized his independence of thought and will. 'I would willingly shake hands with the Devil,' said Churchill once, 'if it meant saving my country.' Bose said the same in so many words in a broadcast from Rangoon:

> If a powerful Empire like the British could go round the world with a begging bowl, what objection could there be to an enslaved and disarmed people like ourselves taking help as a loan from abroad?

Rebellion is an ugly word but most countries have been liberated through rebellion. The Boer war was a rebellion. General Smuts was a rebel. So was De Valera and Washington.

The INA trial excited the whole of India. It appeared as if every Indian was in the dock. The British had hoped that it would have a salutary effect on all communities in India. Actually, they miscalculated and found, instead, that it aroused a wave of unprecedented patriotism throughout the country. It was alleged by them that the accused had violated the army oath they had taken. In point of fact, however, they had superseded that oath by the pledge they had taken to fight for the liberty of their country a cause which transcends all other considerations in life. It was alleged they had fought against their King. How could the British King, a foreigner, who was keeping their country enslaved, be their King? In fact, they were patriotic men, like De Gaulle and others who had led an open revolt for freedom in Europe and elsewhere.

This court martial and that of Bahadur Shah, the titular King of Delhi in 1857, had many things common in the nature of their charges and settings. The prosecution in both was conducted by the British and they were both held

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in the Red Fort at Delhi. In both trials the accused argued that whether the participants in a revolution or a war of Independence are patriots or traitors is determined by their success or failure.

The accused were defended by a galaxy of Indian lawyers like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir B. N. Rau and Bulabhai Desai (their chief spokesman). They were assisted by Jawaharlal Nehru and Asaf Ali. During the trial, I got a message from Bulabhai Desai to try and procure—if I could—a document, in possession of the British Intelligence authorities, which could prove valuable to the defence of these men. I must say to the credit of Colonel Rudra, a senior Indian officer, at the Army Headquarters then, that he assisted me to extract this paper, for a few hours, to read, from the right quarters by great ingenuity. I was thus able to convey its contents to Bulabhai Desai, as promised.

A large crowd used to assemble at the Red Fort to witness this trial. When I went there one day, the British authorities asked me later to explain my presence. I told them there were no orders preventing anyone from attending this court martial and that I was within my rights to do so. They left the matter at that but I knew I had drawn their severe displeasure.

By this time, the Interim Government had come into power. There was a great clamour in the country that the INA personnel captured by the British should be released. But Auchinleck suggested to Nehru that if this was done, it would adversely affect discipline and might disrupt the army. Some senior Indian officers shared this opinion and told Nehru so. When he consulted me on the subject, I told him that the British anticipation was wrong and that if the INA personnel under trial then, who had fought under an Indian flag, were released, it would in fact be generally welcomed. As for those Indians who echoed British sentiments, I said they were merely their Master's Voice and should be ignored. Thanks to Nehru's wisdom, he

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eventually persuaded all concerned to release the INA prisoners.

There was the interesting case of Colonel M. S. Himmatsinhji, a loyal supporter of the British Raj, who turned against them about this time. He was a member of the princely order and an old friend of Auchinleck. He was peeved as the Army Headquarters put him in an innocuous Colonel's appointment, (dealing with welfare) although he had a good record of service. When he asked me what he should do, I suggested he should first represent against the injustice done to him and if his grievance remained unredressed, he should resign from service. He then brought this matter to the notice of Auchinleck, and getting no satisfaction, put in his papers. This was a drastic step the like of which he had never taken before. A few days later, he was nominated as a member representing the Armed Forces in the Legislative Assembly. The British military authorities hoped he would sing their tune at least in the Legislature, little realizing that he had changed his whole outlook toward them. He found the nationalistic atmosphere, in which he moved now, exciting and so opposed the British tooth and nail. When the INA was to be discussed in the Assembly, I advised Himmat to speak during this debate in a tenor espousing the national cause. After some argument, he agreed but asked me if I could draft his speech. This I gladly did and rehearsed him several times with it. On the due date he took courage in both hands, made this speech, much to the consternation of the British and to the pleasant surprise of the Indian political leaders and most Indian Members of the Assembly. Himmat was warmly congratulated by Congressmen and at once came in the lime light. When he was made the Governor of Himachal Pradesh, he was good enough to write and thank me for the advice I had given him earlier which brought him many distinctions.

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Sir Stafford Cripps, a champion of India's liberty, was in town. I was summoned by Nehru one evening and asked if there were any particular points which I wanted to suggest he should discuss with Cripps. (He must have consulted many others similarly.) I told him I had only one point to suggest: that when the British authority withdrew from India, the Indian army should be nationalized at the same time and *not* later, as some had suggested.

Nehru moved to 17 York Road, New Delhi when he became our de facto Prime Minister in the Interim Government of India in September 1946. In his broadcast on 7 September 1946, he outlined India's future domestic and foreign policy: higher standards of living for the 'common and forgotten man in India'; communal harmony; the struggle against untouchability; non-alignment with power blocs; the emancipation of colonial and dependent people; cooperative relations with the UK and the Commonwealth; friendship with the USA and USSR; specially close ties with the countries of Africa and Asia; and, the long range goal of a world commonwealth.

Nehru used to consult me in those days occasionally on some matters informally. As, however, he settled down in his new assignment, he resorted to this practice more sparingly. I found that he was not as strong in dealing with men and matters as he was before Independence. Maybe the weight of responsibility brought about this change.

Colonel Pigot was my immediate boss. He was conscientious and never afraid of telling the truth. These virtues did him no good and he was steadily demoted from the rank of a Major General to that of a Colonel on various excuses. He was a living example of one who was wedded to his profession and who served his country and his army with blood and sweat. I learnt many good things from him.

Professor Amar Nath Jha whom I knew well, once saw a paper I had written on the Russian Army in which I had

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described its composition and how it fought successfully against the Germans. Jha showed it to Auchinleck who was then our Commander-in-Chief and a good friend of his. The Auk, as he was popularly known, invited me to lunch, was very friendly and told me he liked what I had written. Later, however, when the chief showed my piece to his Director, Military Intelligence, he wrote some terse and critical remarks on it. Although there was no politics about what I had written, yet, by now, whatever I did was beginning to be misconstrued by some, as politics, simply because I happened to be known to Nehru and a few other national leaders. The Auk after a few weeks offered me a Grade I appointment in the General Staff Branch but before this could be implemented, he was instrumental in having me appointed as Secretary of the Armed Forces Nationalization Committee. He had also recommended my name to Defence Minister Baldev Singh as his liaison officer in the following terms :

New Delhi
4 Oct. 1946

My dear Defence Minister,

I would like to suggest to you for the post of liaison officer (between the Army Chief and the Defence Minister) Lt Col B. M. Kaul, who is at present acting as Assistant Adjutant General at the General Headquarters. This officer has been through the Staff College, is extremely intelligent and has considerable experience. He is in my opinion a very good officer and likely to go far. I personally would be very glad to have him as your liaison officer to me. . .

Yours sincerely,

Auchinleck
Field Marshal

I think the Auk was a friend of the Indian army but has been misunderstood.

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The Many Parts

And one man in his time plays many parts

SHAKESPEARE

(As you like it)

I TOOK over as Secretary to Sir Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, Chairman of the Armed Forces Nationalization Committee in December 1946. Kunzru, an expert on Defence matters, and Maj Gen K. S. Thimayya were among its members. Our charter was to replace British officers with Indians in the Army, Navy and the Air Force, in command and staff, as soon as possible and as later decided, by June 1948.

It was the first key appointment I held and was excited at the prospects of the Indian Army coming under our own control completely in the near future. Nehru sent for me before I embarked on my duties and asked how soon I thought the Armed Forces could be nationalized. I told him, as I had done earlier also, that though militarily we lacked experience, politically immediate nationalization was essential so that our freedom should not remain fettered in any way. Nehru had been persuaded by many that the British should stay on with the Indian Armed Forces, due to our professional inexperience, for some years to come, though he had agreed with me, a few months earlier, that the Army should be completely nationalized as soon as

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India became free. I stressed that it was not advisable to have the defence of an independent country under foreign control.

Many British officers gave evidence before our Committee and said generally that the Indians were not ready to take over their own Forces for several years to come. They went to the extent of saying that Indians would be unable to do certain jobs, e.g. Military Operations and Intelligence, as they lacked 'suitable' background. When we on the Committee asked what this background was, they could not explain coherently and, when pressed hard by Kunzru, withdrew this flimsy argument. They were saying all this as a last effort to stem the tide of freedom and to save their fading Empire.

In giving evidence before us, most Indians, with odd exceptions, dithered as they were not sure whether the British would go away from India soon or stay on. They[1] played the British tune and said that the latter should remain in the Indian Army for some more years. They took this middle course to safeguard their own position. They were only a few Indians, who said immediate nationalization was possible, e.g. Major (now Lieutenant General) J. S. Dhillon and Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General in the Pakistan Army) Akbar Khan, DSO. These two officers, with a fine record of service, expressed views before our Committee which were bold, logical and patriotic.

The British always discouraged Indian officers commanding the Gurkhas. Auchinleck had told us in the Committee that the King of Nepal and the Gurkha troops were particular that only British officers continued commanding them as hitherto. I thought this was a reflection on Indian officers and this attitude on the part of Nepal, if true, was derogatory to our prestige. I brought this to Nehru's notice and suggested he should refer this point to the King of

1 Their evidence was recorded in writing and is still available.

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Nepal. Nehru was upset at what he heard and at once sent Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, the then Foreign Secretary, on this mission to Kathmandu. Two or three days later Bajpai returned and confirmed that the King of Nepal had contradicted what had been attributed to him. On the contrary, he had said that he would be delighted if Gurkha troops were commanded by Indians. Perhaps Auchinleck was under a genuine misconception on this point.

Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, Kunzru, Thimayya and Musa were towers of strength to the Committee where I had asked for the latter[2] by name to be my No. 2.

The mighty machinery of the Armed Forces slipped out of British hands slowly but steadily till the Indian Army, Navy and the Air Force came under command of three separate Indian Commanders-in-Chief.

I admired Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel for the significant role he had played in our struggle for independence. He, in turn, took me into confidence, at times about certain matters including the question of Kashmir. During one of his morning walks—in the course of which he used to grant interviews—he told me in early 1947 that he found the attitude of Maharaja Hari Singh towards India as unclear. He suggested that as I happened to know this Ruling Prince and was interested in the Kashmir affairs, I should advise him not to play with India but make up his mind one way or the other. I accordingly got in touch with Hari Singh but failed to bring back a concrete reply to Patel. Events moved fast a little later and, this problem was settled with Kashmir acceding to India beyond argument. Soon after this episode I fell seriously ill when Patel took the trouble to come to my bedside and inquired after my health. I was then a Lieutenant Colonel.

Sardar Patel and Nehru never saw eye to eye on many

2 see page 54.

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important matters in which they had violent differences of opinion. Patel was a realist whilst Nehru an idealist. They both had a large following and played an equally important part at a crucial juncture. India could not do without either of them. Patel was a past master in handling delicate matters. It is a tribute to his realistic and ruthless tactics that he folded up all Indian princely states and produced a consolidated India, as if out of a hat, so smoothly. Three brilliant civil servants helped Patel to bring about this political miracle: V.P. Menon, Viswanathan and V. Shankar—like two other equally capable civilians, H.M. Patel and H.V.R. Iengar, who helped in no small measure in the transfer of British power to Indian hands.

It was Sardar Patel who—despite Nehru's hesitation based on General Bucher's warnings of possible consequences—implemented the Police action in Hyderabad with determination in September 1948. Patel favoured a tough policy towards Pakistan whilst Nehru advocated moderation. Many of our leaders both respected and feared Patel, who was a great administrator, whereas they only revered Nehru.

Two important events took place on 23 March 1947. Firstly, the Asian Relations' Conference which was a great gathering symbolizing the resurgence of Asia where Nehru made his debut on the International stage of politics. Secondly, Rear Admiral the Viscount Mountbatten[3] replaced Wavell. He had been Supreme Commander of the South East Asia Command during World War II after a colourful and distinguished operational record. He wielded great political influence, being intimately known to Churchill and the British Sovereign to whom he was related. He was appointed by Attlee as the last Viceroy of India, whilst still in his late forties, on 21 February

3 I had served under him in Burma.

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1947, a day after the historical announcement by the British Government—which some Englishmen have called 'Operation Scuttle'—of transferring power in the India-Pakistan sub-continent by 30 June 1948.

Mountbatten performed his onerous duties with great skill, persuasive enthusiasm and charm. His methods[4] were original and ingenious. For every hour of political discussion, he allowed a quarter of an hour for dictation before seeing the next visitor and as a result had available with him thereafter a detailed and authoritative account of these discussions. Mountbatten displayed great sense of urgency in his task and had, for instance, a calender stuck on the walls of many of his offices in Delhi on which were inscribed in large letters 'Days left for the transfer of power', to remind all concerned and himself of the D day. He thus managed the delicate task of transferring British Power with remarkable speed and smoothness despite many challenging circumstances.

Mountbatten became a great favourite of our people who greeted him on the First Independence Day in 1947 with 'Pandit Mountbatten Ki Jai'.

There were occasions when Nehru's Indian political colleagues proposed a certain action and Mountbatten advised him against it. There was then a tussle and sometimes a stalemate. Mountbatten became a mentor of Nehru

4 When I was appointed adviser to Sir N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar in the Kashmir case at the Security Council in December 1948, Mountbatten suggested to Nehru that I should see Alan Campbell Johnson, his publicity chief, just before I went to USA. This I did, on 5 January 1948. We discussed the Kashmir Case generally and that the UN should use its good offices to solve the problem. I was advised to build up Ayyangar, largely unknown in the UN circles, play down the flamboyant Sheikh Abdullah and to let him loose on the American Press with skilful guidance. We agreed that the capable Press Information Officer—B. L. Sharma—should go with us as our Public Relations Officer. I then saw Nehru and told him of the conversation which had taken place at Mountbatten's and his own instance. (See Alan Campbell-Johnson's *Mission with Mountbatten*, where this incident is mentioned.)

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and could sway the latter's opinions in many matters. It made the new Indian administration both easy and difficult.

Mountbatten first met Nehru in 1945-6 when each made a deep personal impression on the other. Mountbatten had a magnetic personality and adapted himself to the Indian scene admirably. As Nehru was temperamentally anglicized, they got on like a house on fire. In fact a great friendship[5] developed between their families which had many things in common: they were handsome, aristocratic and talented. Mountbatten and Nehru were friends because they were similar personalities. Lady Mountbatten and Nehru were close because she filled a void in his lonely life.

On the eve of their departure, Nehru paid touching tributes to the Mountbattens. To him, Nehru said:

> You came here, Sir, with a high reputation but many a reputation has foundered in India. You lived here during a period of great difficulty and crisis and yet your reputation has not foundered. This is a remarkable feat. . . .

To Lady Mountbatten Nehru said:

> The Gods or some fairy gave you beauty and high intelligence, and grace and charm and vitality, great gifts, and she who possesses them is a great lady wherever she goes. But unto those that have, even more shall be given, and they gave you something which was even rarer than

5 This friendship continued in the years which followed and was kept alive by regular reunions. Whenever Nehru or his daughter went to England or the Mountbattens came eastwards, they made a point of spending sometime in one another's company. On one such occasion when Lady Mountbatten was staying with Nehru, I was invited to have a quiet lunch with them. During this meal, little serious conversation took place. Nehru was unusually relaxed and asked me to relate some humorous incidents he had heard from me earlier. I then related some jests including the definition of 'White Cap' in the Chambers's Dictionary as: a member of a self-constituted Vigilance Committee who under the guise of purifying the morals of the community deal violently with persons of whom they disapprove.

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these gifts, the human touch, the love of humanity, the urge to serve those who suffer and who are in distress, and this amazing mixture of qualities resulted in a radiant personality and a healer's touch. Wherever you have gone, you have brought solace. . . . Is it surprising, therefore, that the people of India should love you and look up to you as one of themselves and should grieve that you are going? The bonds that tie the Mountbattens to us are too strong to be broken and we hope to meet here or elsewhere from time to time. . . .

The Mountbattens had served Britain and India well.

After repeated requests for a transfer back to the Infantry, my parent arm, in which I had started my career, I was selected to command a battalion in 1946. About this time I was chosen as Secretary Nationalization Committee, and a little later, as Military Attache at Washington. General Sir Arthur Smith, Chief of the General Staff at Army Headquarters, called me up at this stage and asked me whether I would like to take over command of an Infantry battalion or go to Washington as Military Attache. I said I was keen on commanding an Infantry battalion. After this, some discussions took place at various levels. Eventually I was informed that I would go to Washington after finishing my work with the Nationalization Committee. I was therefore deprived of commanding an Infantry battalion under orders of superior authority.

On the eve of my departure from India in June 1947, I went to say good-bye to Nehru who told me he was glad I was going to the States. He said he remembered how USA had been our friend during our struggle for independence and was, therefore, anxious that free India should develop a warm relationship with her. He wished me luck by scribbling brief words of good-bye on a piece of autographed card (which I still possess).

I reached New York by S. S. *Queen Mary* along with my wife and two daughters in July 1947 and was struck by its

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statue of Liberty, its sky scrapers and its speeding cars. From there we went to Washington, D.C.

Whilst I was in the process of settling down, things in India were brewing up fast. The British were in a hurry to pull out unscathed before we were plunged in chaos. Nehru was confronted with many baffling situations. He had reluctantly agreed with the Muslim League that Pakistan should come into being as a separate sovereign state provided the latter did not include those parts of India which were unwilling to join. Here were a people who were racially, culturally and linguistically from the same stock and yet now under two different flags. As a result of this decision and on account of religious riots and sectarian propaganda, masses of people were uprooted in the Punjab, Bengal and Sind. During the exodus that followed, much communal hatred and passion was aroused and untold human suffering and misery was witnessed. The most depressing thing about these conflicts and killings was the sense of inner failure we had. All that we stood for in our struggle for independence and all that Gandhi taught our people was suddenly forgotten. It is impossible to assess the loss of human life and the economic damage. A hysteria was let loose and swept the land, leaving in its wake thousands of corpses. Almost a year later Nehru stated, 'we consented (to division) because we thought that thereby we were purchasing peace and good-will, though at a high price.'

At last the much awaited Independence Day came on the 15th of August 1947 when the British flag went down and the Indian tricolour went up. Thus came to an end the rule of the British who had carried on, for 150 years, the self-imposed whiteman's burden in India. In his broadcast to the nation, Nehru spoke at Delhi with great feeling:

> The appointed day has come—the day appointed by destiny. India stands forth again after long slumber and struggle—awake, vital, free and independent. The past clings on to us still in some measure and

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we have to do much before we redeem the pledges we have so often taken. Yet the turning point is past and history begins anew for us, the history we shall live and act and others will write about...on this day, our first thoughts go to the architect of this freedom, the Father of our Nation, who embodying the old spirit of India, held aloft the torch of freedom and lighted up the darkness that surrounds us....

Addressing the Constituent Assembly, at New Delhi, Nehru said:

Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny. We made a pledge, a vow. Now the time has come to redeem it not wholly or in full measure but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes—which comes but rarely in history—when we step out from the old to the new—when an age ends and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance...At the dawn of history, India started on her un-ending quest and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures....

(On the same day, I had the honour to unfurl and salute the tricolour at our Embassy in Washington. When the strains of our national anthem played, I sensed a thrill of infinite ecstasy and pride and hoped that the inertia and deadness of centuries would disappear, now that we were Independent and that a brave new India would emerge....)

For the first time in our history, the whole of the country from the Himalayas[6] to Cape Comorin came under one rule based on a democratic, secular and federal constitution which embodied the fundamental human rights to:

(a) Free expression of opinion[7] including criticism of the government of the day;

6 Kalidasa in *Kumar Sumbhav* describes the Himalayas thus, 'To the North of Bharat is the Himalayas, the king of mountains, worthy of being worshipped as a God; to the East and West, it spreads almost to seas and lies on this earth like a measuring rod.'

7 Woodrow Wilson said: 'The greatest freedom of speech is the greatest safety because if a man is a fool, the best thing is to encourage him to advertise the fact by speaking.'

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(b) Have courts of justice functioning free of executive control and associated with no particular political party, ensuring fair play for the poor and the rich, for private persons as well as government officials;

(c) Allow the ordinary peasant or workman to earn and live by daily toil free from fear of victimization.

Birds seemed to be singing in the air. The sun shone as never before. There was a glint in our eyes. We wished each other well. Hope hung in the air. We could now hold our heads high among the free nations of the world. All our dreams would come true. Milk and honey would flow. The end of all our troubles was in sight. We saw visions of a rebirth. We were our own masters. We would say and do what we liked. We would breathe freely after centuries. We would run our own affairs, tackling hunger, education and family planning in one stride, mould our own policies, align ourselves to no one and take an independent stand in world affairs. We would set our own standards of moral conduct. Just imagine, we could do all these things!

The British, one of whose viceroys, Lord Curzon, had made the following boast, had gone from India at last :

> It will be well for England, better for India and best of all for the progressive civilization in general, if it be clearly understood from the outset that...we have not the slightest intention of abandoning our Indian possessions and that it is highly improbable that any such intention will be entertained by our posterity.

Now that we were free and unfettered, would we build ourselves a foundation of sand or stone, on dream or reality? Would we become united and disciplined? What steps would we take to improve our character? Would we practise what we preached or only give sermons, indulging in hot air instead of cold logic? Would we mind our own business or would we try to pick holes in the affairs of other countries? Would we adopt a 'holier than thou' attitude in our dealings with people? Would we encourage

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theoreticians (who abound in our country) or adopt practical policies? Would we take bold steps to solve our problems or let sleeping dogs lie? Would we see things in their correct perspective, facing facts? Would we judge ourselves objectively or be flattered unduly and blinded by our newly acquired power? These were some of the questions I asked myself on our first Independence Day.

It was remarkable how little resentment there was in my mind and amongst Indians generally against the British—who according to K. M. Pannikar were at one time thinking of proscribing the *Bhagwad Gita*—and despite their past record in India, now that we were free. This was really due to Gandhi and Nehru's[8] magnanimous attitude of letting bygones be bygones. It was also due—though many of us did not realize—to the British (and to some extent to European) contribution to our renaissance in many ways during their 150 years stay here. They played a significant part in the rediscovery of our past culture. Their interest in the ancient lore of India began very early. In 1784, the Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded by Sir William Jones (who translated Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*). In 1785, one Williams translated the *Bhagwad Gita*. Prinsep deciphered the Brahmi script in 1837 which made it possible for us to read the Asokan inscriptions on the pillars and rocks, which no one could till then. Two of these pillars were brought to Delhi by Ferozeshah Tughlak who tried in vain to have the writing on them deciphered. (The Mohenjo-Daro script has not been deciphered till today.)

In archaeology, the great work done by General Cunningham and Sir Alfred Marshall, to mention only two names, is worthy of note. It will be recalled that Lord Curzon (who became notorious for some of his views and activities) vitalized the archaeological research in India.

8 Nehru had spent 3,262 days in British jails.

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Thereafter the work done under the auspices of the then Government of India by such devoted and talented persons as Doctors Vogel and Bloch, Sir Aurel Stein,[9] Sir Alfred Marshal,[10] (Daya Ram Sahni and Majumdar), established the antiquity and continuity of our civilization. They gave us industry—of some sort—irrigation, communications and an impartial judiciary. They gave us a modern army with a single political allegiance; and the steel frame of civil administration which we have preserved and enlarged. Above all, they bequeathed to us discipline and team work.

If there had been British administrators in India with murky records, there also had been benevolent and dedicated British workers in various fields who had rendered invaluable services to us. If they had conquered India with the power of sword, they abdicated in 1947 by the stroke of a pen.

Churchill had said years ago: 'If we open a quarrel between the Past and the Present, we shall be in the danger of losing the future.' I was therefore glad, as were many other Indians, that we decided to remain within the British Commonwealth. To Nehru (who had been jailed thirteen times by the British in the past), it was a partnership of equals which could exercise influence in favour of reduction of tension and peace. He was, however, *not* in favour of owing allegiance to the British Crown and therefore evolved the formula—in 1950—of India being the first Republic within the Commonwealth.

It was unfortunate that when stirring events were taking place at home, I should be abroad. However, I began getting acquainted with my new assignment and with the

9 This intrepid scholar worked in Baluchistan, Iran and Chinese-Turkistan; he also identified many of the places mentioned by Kalhana in his celebrated *Raj Tarangani*.

10 At Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

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international society at Washington. I settled some of my domestic problems such as fixing up a decent place to live and putting my children[11] in a good school.

I spent a few days at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, studying the structure of this great institution and its traditions. Its Commandant at that time was General Maxwell Taylor who in later years was to become a military and diplomatic celebrity. The Academy was lucky to have the inspiring leadership of this great soldier who was doing well by his country. I was greatly impressed with what I saw both in the field of military training and in academic subjects.

I went to Fort Benning in Georgia to attend an exercise run by the Infantry School commanded by Maj Gen 'Mike' O'Daniel, a well-decorated and grim looking cooky. One day I heard a certain foreign Military Attache, who had also been invited on this exercise, running down the Americans. I picked up an argument with him, not because I was a special friend of America but because I thought on principle that it was bad taste for a guest to run down a host. When O'Daniel heard this story, he thawed and gave me what was his first smile.

I found the average American with a great sense of humour. For instance, when I hailed a taxi and told the driver to take me to the State Department, he asked :

'State Department?'

'Yes,' I replied.

'Look chum, we don't have a State Department in this country. It's in London,' he chuckled sarcastically, chewing a cigar, 'where our foreign policy is made.'

We were travelling by train from Washington to New

11 I put my two daughters in the Maret School, a French Institution in Washington which the diplomatic community patronized. A few months later, when I went to ask the Head Mistress of the school about the result of my elder daughter Anuradha, at the end of her term, I was pleasantly surprised to be told that she had secured a double promotion.

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York. My two daughters had by now acquired the Yankee acent in their American school. We were having lunch in the restaurant car when Chitra, my younger child, four years old then, saw an American couple eating salad—a dish which foxed her completely. Looking at lettuce, she asked them innocently: 'Say, why are you eating grass?' They became our friends thereafter.

Mrs. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, Nehru's distinguished sister, has represented India abroad diplomatically on many occasions, advocating our case with skill and bringing credit to us. That year, she was in USA as head of the Indian delegation in the United Nations. T. N. Kaul was her Private Secretary then. She walked up to the dais with great dignity, spoke on behalf of India and other under-developed countries and received a prolonged applause from the whole house. One felt justly proud of this petit lady who had swayed in our favour an uncertain house, packed with the world's picked intelligentsia by a stirring piece of oratory and good logic. I was therefore surprised by an incident which took place a little later. She rang me up in Washington one morning and extended what seemed a pressing invitation to me and my wife to dine with her in New York that night. She told me she had invited many notable U.N. personalities to this dinner. Accordingly, my wife and I went all the way to New York to keep this appointment. As we waited in T.N. Kaul's room, she sent me a message a few minutes before dinner that my wife and I should arrange to dine elsewhere, as an extra couple had to be invited at the last minute and that there was no room for us at her table. I sent a reply to her that I took exception to this affront: she had pressed us to come all the way from Washington to dine with her and that we had no intention of dining anywhere else. A few minutes later, lo and behold, Mrs. Pandit came down, looking fresh as ever, greeted us warmly, never mentioning a word of the message she had sent to us earlier and

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calmly renewed her invitation to us to join her at the dinner. We were stunned at her composure. T.N. Kaul was a witness to this incident. She is truly a seasoned diplomat.

When I heard in Washington that the Pathan tribesmen, inspired by Pakistan, invaded Kashmir on 21 October 1947, I felt that I should not remain abroad but get to Kashmir somehow to do my bit. I therefore made a request to this effect to higher authorities in India. After some time I got back a reply emanating from Nehru that I should come back to India. Nehru told me as soon as I reached Delhi that he was going to Poonch the next day as this garrison was threatened and asked me to accompany him. The Kashmir War was at its height and Poonch was located in the thick of it.

The Prime Minister's party flew from Delhi the next morning and included Sir Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, Sheikh Abdullah, General Russel, the British Adviser, General Cariappa and H. V. R. Iengar. On landing at Jammu, we met Lt Gen Kalwant Singh and were briefed operationally. One of the questions we discussed here was the possibility of blowing up the bridge at Domel and cut the raiders' line of communication—a job for which I had volunteered. Nehru heard this debate with interest. After protracted arguments, however, it was decided not to pursue this proposal any further.

When we reached Poonch, Nehru was told by the Military authorities that as it would be difficult to hold this garrison administratively, it should really be given up. He flew into a temper, reminded them that India had promised to defend Poonch at all costs provided its inhabitants stuck to their posts. Now that they had gone through the ordeal of braving war-time privations and had stayed on, India must, in turn, honour its pledge. He therefore ordered, in no uncertain terms, that the army must hold Poonch at all costs. It was always delightful

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and inspiring to see Nehru stand up for an ideal.

A few days later I went up to Jullundur from where I rang up Lt Col Musa, who was now in the Pakistan Army at Lahore. I told him I would like to look him up and that he should arrange for me to cross the Indo-Pakistan border. He reminded me that we were now in two different armies—who were at strife—and that therefore I should not attempt to cross the border. Ignoring what he said, I drove up to the Attari frontier checkpost. The Pakistan guard asked me for a permit, which authorized me to enter his territory. Whilst I was preparing to give him the reason of not having a permit, the Junior Commissioned Officer in charge of this guard came up on the scene and gave me a big broad grin. We both remembered that we had served together some years ago and he was therefore quite friendly. The 'check' at our border was perhaps not as strict then as today and he let me go without any fuss—for old time's sake—when I told him I was going to see Lt Col Musa. He knew Musa and I were friends and must have believed what I said. Indians wore the same uniform as the Pakistanis in those days. When I confidently entered the premises of Lahore Area Headquarters, an hour later, the Pakistan Sentry never dreamt I belonged to the Indian Army. He saluted me smartly, taking me to be a Pakistani officer, wearing the same uniform and badges of rank, and before I knew, I was confronting Musa in his office. Maj Gen Mohammad Iftikhar Khan was commanding the area and sat in the next room. Musa was in a fix. He had been an intimate friend of mine but was now in the Pakistan Army which was fighting a war with us. He had tried to stop my coming to him but all the same I was now facing him in Lahore in flesh and blood. He told me firmly that I had no business to be in Pakistan, without authority, and that I should get back to India at once. He could have really put me under arrest. Instead, he put me in a jeep, under escort, and

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told me to make for Ferozepur[12] instead of Attari—two important posts widely apart—as soon as possible. It was no good arguing. I was lucky to be back in India unscathed.

A week later Baldev Singh asked me to raise ten thousand irregular guerillas along the borders of Punjab. This became necessary as there was a threat to us from Pakistan. I embarked on this task without delay and was ably assisted in it by General Mohan Singh of the INA fame. But the higher authorities were reluctant to take the risk of arming this force. On the other hand, raising an unarmed force seemed to me a futile effort. I was on the point of bringing matters to a head when I was summoned by Nehru to Delhi. He asked me to proceed to the Security Council at Lake Success in two days' time as Military Adviser to Sir Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, who had been appointed Leader of the Indian Delegation to the Security Council on the Kashmir case. Nehru said that whereas I could serve India by fighting in Kashmir, I would render greater service by advising our delegation in the Kashmir case in the United Nations. I therefore reluctantly flew back to the United States in January 1948.

Just before I left Delhi for Washington (and the war in Kashmir had been on for about three months) Nehru called Air Vice Marshal S. Mukerji and me to his residence one evening. He referred to a recent discussion between him and Mukerji and asked me to explore the possibility of buying some medium Mitchel bombers in the USA. The fact that I, and not our Ambassador at Washington, Asif Ali, was being asked to deal with this delicate matter, was due to reasons I never discovered.

On returning to USA before making an official approach, which, in such cases is seldom free from various pressures,

12 Brigadier K. Umrao Singh was commanding a brigade at Ferozepur.

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I saw Louis Johnson[13] in this connection. He met me warmly and, as a result of using his influence, fixed up, with utmost despatch, the sale of these bombers from the war time surplus stocks now commercially available. News of this deal somehow leaked out to the State Department as also the British authorities. Consequently Warren Austin, Leader of the US and Lord Ismay,[14] Military Adviser to the British delegations respectively, at the Security Council talked to me soon after. The latter said that in view of the past connections of our two countries, it would have been a good thing if India had asked UK for Military Aid. Warren Austin, on the other hand, asked me if there was any particular reason why I or our Ambassador had not gone through the State Department in this matter. I said official channels seldom moved speedily and as we were in a hurry, I had resorted to the 'old-boy' net, as many others do in special circumstances. Austin told me regretfully that the Government of the United States would have to reluctantly prohibit the transaction I had struck with Louis Johnson unofficially, as they, in fairness, could not discriminate between India and Pakistan. I argued that when our country was virtually at war with Pakistan, as she had invaded our territory, we were perfectly within our rights to try and do all we could to save our country from this peril. I told him it was a pity that protocol or some other considerations stood in our way. I did not, however, get any change out of Warren Austin and we got *no* bombers in the bargain.

'Babboo' Haksar of the Foreign Service and I spent a sleepless night, preparing points for the opening speech of Ayyangar, who, however, toned down much of the factual material we had put up—and gave what could be

13 He had visited India in 1942 as President Roosevelt's Special Envoy when he boldly supported India's stand for freedom. He was a powerful figure in the USA and later became its Defence Secretary.

14 Ismay was Mountbatten's Chief of Staff at Delhi during 1947-8.

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termed, at best, a gentleman's address but which created little impression on this merciless International Forum. Sir Zafarulla Khan, leader of the Pakistani delegation, on the contrary, answered us back with telling effect. When we asked Ayyangar to refute, forcefully, the many inaccuracies contained in Zafarullah's address, he said he was not prepared to sling back any mud and would maintain India's dignity[15] by ignoring Zafarullah's hollow eloquence.

I[16] met Gromyko, who was Russia's principal spokesman at the Security Council, at my request, at lunch in the latter's residence. When asked whether he, on behalf of USSR, would support us in the Kashmir issue, he said, enigmatically, that when an astute people like the British had to pull out of India after their association with us for nearly two hundred years without fully understanding our problems, how then could his country, who got acquainted with our difficulties only recently do better than the British, so far as grasping the Kashmir problem was concerned and be expected by us to take a concrete stand on this issue in haste. After a long talk, during which Gromyko was generally cautious, he said that the Russian delegation would neither support nor oppose but would abstain from voting on the Kashmir issue in the Security Council. (Both USSR and USA were, in fact, not sure of their ground regarding Kashmir.)

Sheikh Abdullah tried many times to speak about Kashmir in the Security Council but Ayyangar did not agree. It was, however, difficult to keep the 'Lion of Kashmir' in check, who when muffled, felt desperate and looked for a suitable opportunity to defy. In February,

15 Once again, in 1965, when Bhutto, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, called us names in the Security Council, though we staged a walk-out, we did not deal with him effectively on the spot.

16 Sheikh Abdullah, who had joined our delegation in the meantime and was then our great supporter, accompanied me at the last minute, at his own instance, to Gromyko's lunch.

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Abdullah sprang a surprise by giving extempore, what was a spirited and versatile presentation of the Kashmir case. Addressing Pakistan, he said :

> How is it that you have now become the champions of our liberty? I know that in 1946, when I raised the cry of 'Quit Kashmir', the great leader of Pakistan Mohammad Ali Jinnah, opposed my movement, declaring that it was a movement of a few renegades and as such, he had nothing to do with it. . . .

Referring to Nehru, Abdullah said he felt honoured 'that a great man like him claimed him as a friend. He is a Kashmiri and blood is thicker than water.'

The case dragged on. Several speeches were made on all sides but none settled our dispute. We remained at the Security Council for four months when we heard many people speaking with two voices and saw power politics at its worst. The U.N. had a laudable charter but it was not being observed in spirit. The net result was that the aggressor in Kashmir—Pakistan—was not asked to vacate aggression.

On 30 January 1948, I was woken up in my hotel in New York early in the morning by a telephone call from a correspondent of the United Press of America and told that Gandhi had just been assassinated in Delhi. This news shook me as it did the whole world. Here was the apostle of peace, perhaps the greatest man since Christ, Father of our Nation, and the liberator of our country, who had been murdered by one of his compatriots. When the ailing Ayyangar heard this stunning news, he all but collapsed.

The Security Council observed a two-minute silence, their heads bowed in deference to Gandhi who, according to them, stood for the same principles as the U.N. It was an imposing spectacle seeing the representatives of so many nations dwarfed under the impact of Gandhi's death.

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In India, there was universal mourning and everyone paid glowing tributes to the departed leader. Said Nehru, with a choked voice and tears in his eyes :

> Friends and Comrades : The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. I do not know what to tell you and how to say it...our beloved leader is no more....

Soon after, I began to agitate for an early return to India. Ayyangar agreed at last and I boarded S. S. *Queen Elizabeth* to return home. Just then, H.V.R. Iengar, Nehru's renowned Principal Private Secretary, informed me by cable that the Prime Minister desired I should stay on with our delegation in the USA a little longer. I was left with no choice but to disembark and cool my heels at Lake Success for another few days. After continued efforts during this period, I was ultimately allowed to return to Delhi on my way to Kashmir.

At this stage let me briefly describe Kashmir and some of the events which had taken place there. It covers an area of 85,000 square miles and has a population of over four million, three out of which are Muslim and one Hindu. It has two cities, 40 towns and 9,000 villages. It is rich in mineral wealth and agriculture is the main occupation of its people.

Before the withdrawal of the British from India, they exercised suzerainty over the Indian princely states, about 565 in number. These states were now to accede either to India or to Pakistan. India was responsible up to now for their protection and defence. The new Constitution provided that the states acceding to India would become its integral part and those acceding to Pakistan, part of that state. The State of Jammu and Kashmir delayed its decision in this regard and offered to enter, in the meantime, into a stand-still agreement with both India and Pakistan on 12 August 1947. Pakistan

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tried to starve Kashmir by refusing her population in 1947 the supplies of oil, sugar, kerosene, salt and food-grains, in violation of the stand-still agreement. This was an attempt to coerce Kashmir to accede to Pakistan. When she failed in this effort, she tried another method which prevented further negotiations on the subject. Pakistan gave 'leave' to many of their regular army personnel and incited tribesmen from North West Frontier, who, armed with modern weapons and led by the Pir of Manki Sharif and Pakistani regular officers, invaded Kashmir.[17] This combined force was put under command of Brigadier Akbar Khan, who assumed the pseudonym of General 'Tarikh'. They entered the town of Muzzafarabad at daybreak on 21 October and indulged in indiscriminate killing and plunder. The State troops were taken by surprise and liquidated. The raiders were in Chinari on the 23rd and Uri on the 24th. By the 27th, they were in Rampur and Baramula.[18] They ransacked the Cathedral, raped and killed the nuns of the St. Joseph Convent. Colonel and Mrs Dykes, along with their two children, a British family, enjoying a holiday, were done to death. From Baramula they went towards Gulmarg and Srinagar, continuing in murder, arson and looting, sparing neither women, children nor the old or infirm. These acts aroused the people of Kashmir—as also me, a fellow Kashmiri—against Pakistan. The Kashmir National Conference, then led by Sheikh Abdullah, influenced Maharaja Hari Singh to request India on 27 October 1947 for assistance to repel the invader and for accession,

17 There is ample evidence to prove Pakistan's complicity and active aid to the tribal raiders. In any case, Pakistan belatedly acknowledged it in 1948 (of their troops' presence in Kashmir during these operations against us). I was present in the Uri battle in May 1948 when the first regular Pakistani soldier —belonging to one of their Frontier Force units—fell in our hands.

18 Where a memorial to the young Mohamed Maqbool Sherwani who was crucified with many other local citizens bears testimony to this day of the raiders' reign of terror.

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to India. The Governor-General of India accepted this appeal and Kashmir thus acceded to India, becoming one of its constituent states from that date. She was, however, informed that it was India's wish to make a reference to people of Kashmir *as soon as law and order had been resorted and her soil cleared of the invader*.[19] India then rushed her troops at once by air and stemmed the tide of the raiders' onslaught on the city of Srinagar and its airfield. Baramula was recaptured on 8 November and Uri on the 11th.

Pakistan often contends that the people of Kashmir favouring accession to her rose in revolt against the Ruler. If this was so, the few Indian troops could not have landed in Srinagar in October 1947 or maintained their long lines of communications against the Kashmiris themselves. Besides, the Pakistani invaders would have been warmly received, instead of being resisted violently by volunteers and the local Kashmir Militia. India repeatedly appealed to Pakistan to deny assistance to the invaders but in vain. Any action by India to attack the bases of invaders in Pakistan would have resulted in an all-out-war with her (as seen in 1965). India, instead, told Pakistan firmly that if the latter did not deny the invaders' assistance of various kinds and the use of Pakistan territory for operations, she would be compelled to take such action, consistent with the provisions of the U.N. Charter, as she might consider necessary, to protect her interests. Pakistan gave no reply to this communication. India then filed a formal complaint to the Security Council.

(Pakistan emphatically denied that it had taken any part in this invasion. The Security Council passed an innocuous resolution asking both sides to take all possible steps to improve the situation. It also sent out a Commission to India and Pakistan which reached there in July

19 Conditions not fulfilled to this day.

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1948 and were surprised to learn from Pakistan that their regular troops had been fighting in Jammu and Kashmir since May that year. Actually, they were there much earlier. Later, Sir Owen Dixon, the U.N.'s Representative for India and Pakistan said :

> When the frontier of Jammu and Kashmir was crossed on 20 October, 1947 by hostile elements, it was contrary to international law and when the regular units of the Pakistan forces moved into Jammu and Kashmir, it was also inconsistent with international law.

The case of India is that Pakistan[20] is the aggressor in Jammu and Kashmir and should vacate aggression. All other arguments are irrelevant.)

When I reported to Maj Gen P. N. Thapar, Military Secretary at the Army Headquarters, on return from the USA in April 1948, he informed me that I had been selected to command an Infantry Battalion then involved in the Jammu and Kashmir operations. Two or three days later, Thapar told me that as the Government of Jammu and Kashmir had asked for me by name for command of their Militia, the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister had both agreed. Thapar also said that this command—comprising many irregular Infantry Militia Battalions—would count as equivalent to commanding a regular Infantry battalion. I made a last minute effort to see if I could not get out of this arrangement and saw Nehru at his house. I explained to him the importance to a professional soldier of commanding an infantry battalion. Nehru was tired after a long day's work and told me sharply that whatever military considerations there might be in my mind, he was convinced that it would be in the country's

20 A country where the first and indirect elections have been held—under doubtful circumstances—seventeen years after it became free.

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interest if I was made available to the Kashmir Government for the Militia. No amount of argument on my part was of any avail. And that was that.[21]

On 25 April, I flew from Delhi to Kashmir to take over my new assignment. Maj Gen K. S. Thimayya was in the same plane to assume command of our forces in Jammu and Kashmir. Two days later I accompanied Thimayya to Poonch. The flight to this garrison was, as always, a tricky affair because the aircraft had to take a precarious turn over a nullah and come tortuously on to its airstrip, skirting dangerously past enemy positions nearby.

Thimayya heard that a large number of warring Pathans were meeting in a *jirgah* (tribal council), not far from Poonch. He conveyed this significant information to the Army and Air Headquarters, Delhi and asked for an air strike on this sitting target. Generals Bucher and Gracey, the Indian and the Pakistan Army Chiefs, then got in touch with each other. No one knows what they talked. At the end of their pow-wow, Bucher[22] warned our government that if an air strike was carried out on these Pathans, Pakistan might take this reprisal seriously enough to declare war on us. (As if we were playing cards with Pakistan, as things stood!) So these Pathans were left untouched only to fight us wherever they chose and we preferred to take advice in this matter from a foreign General rather than one of our own, such as Cariappa or Thimayya. (During one of my discussions with Nehru about this time, I suggested that we should hit the Pakistan bases. Nehru said he was not in favour of extending

21 This was the second time within a year and a half that I was being deprived of commanding an infantry battalion for national considerations!

22 Thimayya put pressure on Nehru to take a strong line in this case in vain. Nehru agreed with Bucher's favourite argument, not realizing that Bucher's logic was unsound, and Thimayya's practical.

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our operational activities against that country because he had been assured by his advisers that Pakistan would collapse financially in a matter of months as its creaking economy could not bear the burdens of a war for long. I remember telling him that one of the major Power blocs would ensure that Pakistan does not 'disappear' on account of money. No country, however small, was allowed to 'die' by interested parties, because of financial difficulties. It was to the advantage of one country or another to come to her aid 'in her hour of need'. Later events proved that Pakistan grew stronger, and not weaker, with the passage of time.)

I was driving Thimayya's jeep on the way to Uri. There was a nip in the air and the fragrance of pines around. As we reached Mahura, we were warned by the local commander that between there and our destination the enemy was sniping the road from the other side of the river. It was customary for a certain senior commander here to travel in such conditions in an armoured car for personal safety. Thimayya, however, thought a commander should move about in battle within view of his men and not sheltered inside an armoured car. We, therefore, resumed our journey in a jeep, driven by me, and as we were turning a corner on this winding uphill road, a South Indian soldier came rushing towards us and blocked our way. He was hatless and dishevelled and belonged to a Madras battalion, located not far from where we were. He said his Commanding Officer, Lt Col Menon, had just been ambushed by the enemy. Early that morning, a 'friendly' Bakarwal, (a nomad) in reality an enemy agent, woke up Lt Col Menon and told him that the Pakistanis had overnight infiltrated upto a point adjacent to his battalion headquarters and that if required he could show him where this was. The Colonel, a gallant and inquisitive man, at once agreed to accompany his informant and to get to grips with the enemy. They had barely gone a

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few hundred yards, when the Bakarwal himself took cover behind a boulder and signalled Menon to carry on. Poor Menon unsuspectingly walked straight into an enemy trap and along with some of his men was shot dead! The man who had related this account was the odd survivor. General Thimayya and I, on hearing this story, jumped out of the jeep and rushed up towards the scene of this action. It was perhaps not prudent to do so as we might have been ambushed also, but then every action is not logical in war. Thimayya was anxious to see where one of his subordinates had lost his life and set a good example to others in the field in doing so.

When I first reached Srinagar, Sheikh Abdullah, arranged for me a huge rally of the Militia I was taking over. He was there himself and introduced me to this force, relating how hurriedly it was raised when Pakistan attacked Kashmir and describing brave deeds by many Kashmiris including Zadu who sacrificed his life near Tithwal. I found this force needed brushing up in discipline, tactics and shooting. I, accordingly, took adequate steps to raise its military standards.(I must admit, however, that to have initially organized this Militia in a crisis from a scratch was an excellent effort on the part of the Kashmir leaders.)

The Army High Command decided to launch a two-pronged attack on the enemy : one near Uri and the other near Handwara so that both the drives should meet near Domel-Muzzaffarabad. I was asked to commit two Militia infantry battalions to these operations. In view of the urgency of the occasion, I hastened to prepare the requisite units to participate in these two offensives. I found, however, that many of them needed improvement physically, in handling their weapons or in minor tactics. Yet, they had to make a start sometime. So they took up positions with 161 Brigade at Uri and 163 Brigade at Handwara.

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Thimayya and I went up to the Nagi[23] Picquet in 163 Brigade commanded by Brigadier (now Lt Gen) Harbakhsh Singh. It was situated on the top of a spur, half of which was held by us and the other half by Pakistanis. We struggled up the hill, and passed through some dead ground which the enemy was sniping.

The operations in Handwara began on 16 May. A day before, a man called Nazir, once a forest officer and now at the disposal of the army, voluntarily went out in disguise to penetrate the enemy's forward defended localities and bring back whatever operational information he could. After staking his life in a deadly situation, he returned the next day triumphantly, with invaluable 'intelligence' about the enemy. Harbakhsh then launched his attack with 163 Brigade boldly and pushed the enemy back to Tithwal. I remained during this operation with him and the troops on the 16th and 17th as I had one of my Militia battalions here. But for lack of logistical support, he would have exploited this success further.

I reached Uri on 18 May. The plan was for 161 Brigade to capture the heights of Islamabad feature held by the enemy opposite Uri and resume our advance to Domel. It was reliably learnt that the enemy used to virtually abandon his position at the top of the Islamabad feature, holding it lightly and spend the nights at lower and warmer altitudes, on the reverse slopes. It was accordingly decided to capture this feature by a surprise night attack and the Second Dogras were entrusted with this job.

A day before the attack,—when I[24] reached Uri—our men, were caught in the enemy mortar and artillery bombardment and suffered many casualties. The Brigade Commander and I, as also some others, had a taste of

23 Nagi, after whose name the picquet was known, was a Junior Commissioned Officer who had held on to this picquet tenaciously not long ago.

24 I had one of my militia battalions here also. I was going from one front to the other to be with my troops and to see how they were doing in battle.

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some shelling as we lay trying to locate enemy positions in an area called the 'Fort'. On the D day, the Dogras quietly assembled near the Uri bridge, held their breath and looked at their watches. There was pin drop silence and an air of excitement. At the tick of H hour, which was ten at night, they slipped across the Forming-up place on their tip-toes and started going up the massive Islamabad feature. The plan was to storm its heights before first light and catch the enemy unawares. But, somehow, our men took longer to crawl up this position and, in the meantime, the enemy, getting scent of their advent, stole a march and were ready to give us a hot reception from the top. When the Dogras, instead of capturing their objective, got involved in a battle, the Brigade Commander had to send 6/6 Rajputana Rifles to retrieve this situation later. If this delay in the capture of the Islamabad feature had not taken place and the operation had come off as originally planned, we would have had the enemy on the run and might well have captured Domel. Now he got time to consolidate his positions all along the route, anticipated our moves and frustrated our plans.

During the previous night, before the Rajputana Rifles saved the situation, the Brigade Commander and I sat all night in a forward position, frozen in the cold and wondering how the attack of 2 Dogra was progressing. As the Commanding Officer was hugging the roadside and was miles away from the men he commanded, he was out of the picture. He was, therefore, in no position to send back any news of how the attack was going, whilst we waited to hear from him. During the same night, we saw a multitude of lights going up the Haji Pir Pass which confused us completely. Was the enemy coming upon us from our rear or the flank, or was he withdrawing to some other point? Later, we discovered that it was only a diversionary move and a ruse on his part.

During the next three days or so, I found myself amidst

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a ding-dong battle which followed. The enemy had set up a strong position astride the main road. Lt Col (now Maj Gen) 'Sparrow' Rajinder Singh and I were standing near a point swept by enemy fire when Lt Col Oberoi of the Gorkhas came up from Thimayya's headquarters and asked us where the Brigade Commander was, as he had an important message for him. We told him Brigadier Sen was near a hut just beyond, but as the enemy machine-gun fire prevented anyone moving further, we suggested he should wait and we would all go together. Oberoi ridiculed our caution and proceeded forward. In a fit of bravado, Rajinder Singh and I also staggered ahead. We had hardly covered a few yards along the road when a burst of machine-gun fire whizzed past us, over our heads, missing us narrowly. We fell on the ground in double-quick time to get below the level of this hail of bullets. Oberoi, a brave officer, now saw, good humouredly, that our earlier warning to him had some meaning.

7 Sikh were given orders to advance on the left of the road by eight on the night of 21 May and capture a certain height. They came under heavy fire and could not make much headway. Our main effort, on the road, also encountered stiff opposition. Our right hook by the Kumaonis, led gallantly by Lt Col (now Lt Gen) M. M. Khanna, however, went well but had to be halted lest it out-stretched itself logistically. The Brigade, as a whole, came to a standstill after a little more fruitless fighting and our advance petered out not far from the 58th mile-stone on the Uri-Domel Road.

Thimayya had made a bold bid for Domel. He was a good leader himself, and though some of his subordinate commanders fought well, he failed to capture his prize.

In August, a frantic signal was received from the Leh garrison commander, Lt Col Prithi Chand, to say that as he had been told by the authorities to fight to the last round

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and the last man, he must comment that though he had the will, he did not have the means to do so. He added that unless his shortages in men, ammunition, rations and clothing were made up, he must inform all concerned clearly that he would not be able to hold on to Leh for long, in view of overwhelming enemy pressure. Thimayya sympathized with all concerned when they were in such a predicament. I had come to see him in some other connection, soon after he had received this signal. When he read it out to me, I volunteered to go to Leh so that I could report to him objectively what the situation was like. He agreed to my request and the next morning I flew to Leh. The air route to Ladakh ran via Zoji La which was still in enemy hands. When our Dakota was flying above the pass, the enemy opened machine-gun fire, hit one of its wings but the plucky pilot landed us at Leh safely a few minutes later.

Leh was 11,500 feet high and was surrounded by picquets up to altitudes of 16,000 feet. In those days during their halts at Leh, our aircraft never switched off their engines, lest they froze and flew back to Srinagar within fifteen minutes.

On arrival at Ladakh's capital, I met Lt Col Prithi Chand, who had occupied Leh overland earlier during winter, a creditable feat. He was a gallant and colourful soldier. We had about 400 men here as against the enemy's 1,300. There were two companies of 2/4 Gorkhas and some battered remnants of the Jammu and Kashmir State Forces who had been withdrawn from Pakistan and Kargil. The garrison was woefully short of supplies and clothing. Cooking and boiling water at this height was a problem. Men were worried about their families from whom they had received no mail for months and we had cases of septic wounds due to lack of medical facilities. Yet, even in these circumstances, there were examples of individual gallantry.

I also met here Major Harichand who was commanding a company of 2/8 Gorkhas. He was a fearless soul, having

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many successful actions to his credit. Our garrison had only small arms and little ammunition. The enemy had, however, hauled up a 3·7 inch howitzer and placed it at a commanding position which Hari Chand promised to neutralize. He caught the enemy napping, raided this position, destroyed the gun and killed its crew who were fast asleep in a shelter by its side. For this and other acts of gallantry, and having seen the conditions in which he was operating, I initiated a recommendation, to General Thimayya, who supported it to higher authorities for the award of Mahavir Chakra which he was duly granted.

Subedar Bhim Chand was at Tharu, about twelve miles beyond Leh where I met him. He had become a hero with the local villagers as he had saved their villages from many enemy onslaughts. One day he heard that his wife had died in his village, leaving behind two children. He was very upset to hear this news and asked for short leave to settle his domestic affairs. The leave, of course, was promptly sanctioned but within minutes the villagers at Tharu—a military stronghold—flocked around their saviour and asked him to postpone his departure as they feared another enemy attack and as they thought only he could save them. He was on the horns of a dilemma: should he go to his children, who had lost their mother or should he remain at his post, in a critical situation, and save many innocent people here? After much deliberation, and with a lump in his throat, he decided to stay on in Tharu, for a few days more, and stick to his post. And in the ensuing battle, he lived up to the hopes of his admirers. For this devotion to duty and other acts of bravery, I forwarded to the higher authorities a recommendation for the grant of Vir Chakra which he was awarded.

After living with this beleaguered garrison and seeing their grim situation and the gallant way they were standing up to it, I returned to H. Q. 19 Division by air and reported to Maj Gen Thimayya what I had seen.

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Two young Dogra girls, Sita and Sukhnu, were abducted from village Sumbal near Ramban by some Bakarwals. When their father appealed for assistance to Lt Col Ranbir Singh, M. C., the Commanding Officer of a Rajput Battalion located near Banihal, he, in his chivalrous attitude, readily rose to the occasion and detailed a party of soldiers to bring back the girls from wherever they were. In their quest, they came into clash with armed Bakarwals and without retrieving the girls were apprehended themselves. An inquiry was then ordered by Delhi to bring to surface all facts in this case and I was appointed its President. Abdullah did not cooperate with this court in many ways. We had difficulty in getting some witnesses. Abdullah tried to make a political issue out of this case. He threatened to resign and warned Nehru that unless stern action was taken against a group of Indian troops (on charges which were never proved), 'the repercussions on the population of Kashmir would be serious.' This was his favourite argument but Government of India carried on the inquiry all the same.

It was alleged these two girls had been abducted from their village, moved from pillar to post on foot over the Pir Panchal range, and 'married' to several Bakarwals in turn during the last few months. I also understood that one Shambhoo Nath had been arrested by Abdullah on a fake allegation and was now under arrest in Srinagar. In those days if Abdullah could level no other plausible charge against men he did not approve, he used to label them as R.S.S.[25] (Rashtriya Sevak Sangh) workers. He could then punish them on 'secular' grounds. We eventually managed to get Shambhoo Nath before us for giving evidence and heard his harrowing tale. He had been President of the National Conference at Verinag and just because he acted as a guide to some Indian troops, in the recent affray, he

25 The counter part of the Muslim League.

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had lost his 'importance' all of a sudden, was labelled as an R.S.S. worker and jailed. He alleged he was made to march bare-footed and shackled. Shambhoo Nath showed me deep marks of the beatings (by the authorities) he had received on various parts of his body so that he should be compelled to confess imaginary crimes he had never committed. History seemed to have receded back to mediaeval times. I reported this case to Sardar Patel informally. When Shambhoo Nath was eventually released, he was afraid his life would be in danger in Kashmir. I therefore got him a job in a factory near Delhi and slipped him out of Kashmir in a military lorry. I then wrote a scathing report on this case which went through proper channels to Government. I heard that Abdullah approached General Bucher for help. Bucher ignored my report and recommendation and initiated, instead, a case against our Rajput soldiers on various charges. These men were, however, released later for want of evidence. Bucher also tried to be vindictive towards Lt Col Ranbir Singh, M.C., Commanding Officer of the Rajputs and Brigadier (later Lt General) Bikram Singh, the Brigade Commander, to placate Abdullah.

General Bucher's appointment as India's Commander-in-Chief was far from well received in the Indian Army. Some renowned British officers like Lockhart and Russel had not been appointed to this post perhaps because they were independent and outspoken. Bucher, on the other hand, had a mediocre military record, having commanded nothing much in his career.

I had come from Kashmir to Delhi to attend a conference and was having breakfast with Nehru. After the normal chit-chat, I raised before him, with due apologies, a delicate topic; whether it was proper that Roy Bucher whilst he was India's C-in-C should occasionally ring up Gracey, Pakistan's Army Chief, exchange operational information

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mutually and discuss with him various operational matters over the telephone whilst the two countries were at war. What kind of a war was being conducted, in which the two opposing Chiefs seemed to be hand in glove? I also asked whether it was correct for Bucher to have resisted an air strike by us against the concentration of a large number of militant Pathans in the Poonch Sector, specially when they were bound to pose a threat to us later if spared then. Whatever the reasons, was it ever fair to spare the enemy in war, when we knew that he would try to kill us instead, if he could. I ended up by saying that I thought Bucher enjoyed little prestige in the Indian Army nor did he wield much influence in the British War Office. What, then, was his function in life, I asked. I also remarked that, if Bucher went to London, as I had heard he was going, on a procurement mission for military equipment, I was sure that as he enjoyed little influence with the British authorities in UK, he would bring back hardly anything we needed.

Nehru took my tirade against Bucher with a pinch of salt and did not encourage any further conversation. He often did that when he did not wish to discuss an unpleasant topic. I heard later that though Bucher did go to UK on an urgent procurement mission (for military equipment) he returned from there almost empty-handed, bringing back with him many ifs and buts. When I asked Nehru, how Bucher had fared in London, he admitted he had not done too well. When Bucher left and Cariappa became India's Commander-in-Chief a few months later, this step was universally approved in the Indian Army.

I had quite a rough passage with Abdullah when I found him interfering with the Militia which I commanded. Pressure was put in cases of promotions and discipline. As I brooked no interference, I became a *persona non grata* with Abdullah. One day a militia soldier had been arrested for a serious crime and was to be tried by a Court-martial whilst I was away to an operational front on an *Id* day.

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Abdullah ordered my subordinates through his staff, in my absence to release this man as a part of general amnesty on that auspicious Day. I later heard that the culprit, instead of being given exemplary punishment, as he should have received, was given by Abdullah an assignment in the police. I created much din and noise but it was like crying in the wilderness. No brass hat took any notice of what I said. Politics was reigning supreme in military affairs.

A few days later, a soldier who had been convicted for a certain crime went on hunger strike in protest. Here was a political stunt creeping into the army again. I therefore thought I better deal with this sort of tendency without mercy. Accordingly, I gave orders to Lt Col G. S. Puri, my competent staff officer, that this man, even if he gave up his hunger strike, should be given no food for a day or two thereafter and kept alive on water. It would do him some good if he learnt a lesson the hard way. In the meantime, while he refused to eat, I made him run around a sports ground with a heavy load on his back, even if he malingered. When this 'political' soldier nearly passed out, I was asked by one of Abdullah's spokesmen to deal with him leniently. I told him I was only discouraging indiscipline from creeping into our ranks and that no pity need be shown in cases where an example was to be set. But when one decides that principles are more important than propriety, it is not uncommon to be misjudged.

In mid-summer, Sheikh Abdullah sent for me and said that according to his information, there was much communal tension in Kishtwar and that I should therefore take a J and K Militia unit composed of a particular community there in order to restore the confidence of the local population. I told him that it was customary for us not to nominate troops by communities in the Indian Army and allotted them only specific tasks; and that as such, I would take with me any troops that were available. I think Abdullah reported this case to higher military authorities—as if I

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was doing something wrong—and I was asked to give various explanations. When, however, they heard that a communal tinge was being given to a simple case, they did not interfere with me any further.

I understood that Adalat Khan, an ex-Lt Colonel of the Jammu and Kashmir Forces had migrated to Pakistan earlier but had now been recalled by Abdullah and made Administrator of Kishtwar. Mrs. Krishna Mehta, who was working in Nehru's household and whose father lived in Kishtwar gave me a totally different version to that which Abdullah did.

I marched with about a hundred men of the 1/2 Punjab Paratroopers from Batote and after covering 65 miles in torrential rain reached Kishtwar, in two and a half days. Lt Col (now Brigadier) 'Kim' Yadav was commanding a Militia battalion there. He was ADC to Lord Louis Mountbatten during 1946-7 and an outstanding officer. I found great dissatisfaction prevailing in Kishtwar, not as painted by Abdullah but to the contrary and that Adalat Khan was certainly not proving to be an ideal administrator..

After taking some immediate and salutary steps through Kim Yadav which restored public confidence, I returned to Srinagar via Pir Panchal. But as it took me 3/4 days to march back, before I reached the Kashmir capital, Adalat Khan had, in the meantime, sent a report to Abdullah, complaining against my visit to Kishtwar and the 'high-handed' actions I had taken. He had done this as a defensive measure because his maladministration had been exposed for the first time. When Abdullah confronted me with this allegation, I told him it was baseless and that I had done nothing which could be termed improper. He, however, sent in an exaggerated report to Nehru, threatening that he could no longer assure him of Kashmir's continued political support if cases of 'this' nature were allowed by India to take place. Also, that some of his ministers were threatening to resign on this issue (*sic*). Nehru was naturally indignant,

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not knowing what the facts were, called me down to Delhi forthwith and without hearing my side of the story, said angrily: 'Seikh Abdullah had conveyed to me the gist of your recent actions in Kishtwar. I just don't understand. What do you think you are? If you go on like this, you will lose Kashmir for India one day.'

'But do you know the facts, sir?' I asked.

'It is enough for me to know that you have fallen out with Sheikh Abdullah, whatever the circumstances. We cannot afford to be at loggerheads with him. I thought you of all people knew better, he said loudly, fuming with rage.

I kept quiet because I thought that if facts were not important and politics was above conscience, I had nothing to say.

'Why don't you say something?' Nehru asked.

I was sulking now and said: 'Sir, If you don't want to know facts and have already made up your mind to judge my actions in Kishtwar as wrong, without giving me a hearing, there is no point in my saying anything.'

Nehru was at the point of saying something more when he suddenly left the room in a huff.

The next morning Nehru sent for me again. He now greeted me warmly and asked me to relate to him the details of what I had seen in Kishtwar recently. He seemed a different man. I wonder if someone had spoken to him in the meantime. Anyway, I began by saying that he himself had sent me to Kashmir, at the recommendation of the Jammu and Kashmir Government, on my return from America, for national considerations. As for Kishtwar, I was sent there at Abdullah's request. I went on to say that I had by personal observation in Kishtwar, found that mismanagement of administration prevailed in that isolated district where many of our service rifles had fallen in the hands of unauthorized individuals who, with these and other weapons, had done much mischief; where several young girls had been abducted forcibly and married to undesirable

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men; and where many other similar crimes had been committed. I ended up by saying that I was bringing this and some other cases to official notice so that stern action could be taken lest this state of affairs under Abdullah;[26] if not put right, may have a come back on us one day.

I then took this opportunity and related to him many other undesirable activities going on in Kashmir under Abdullah. Nehru heard all I had to say with patience. After a long pause he explained to me the various baffling aspects of the Kashmir politics and the need for us to remain friendly with Sheikh Abdullah. He said he was pained to hear what I had to say but, for various practical considerations, there was little he could do in the matter. He then said that the rub of the whole thing was that Abdullah had asked for my removal from Kashmir as he found my presence a hindrance in his work. Nehru said though he felt I was not to blame in any specific way, it was difficult for him to ignore the request of Abdullah, who was, after all, the Prime Minister of Kashmir and with whom I had fallen out. He said it was easier for him to remove[27] an individual like me than to remove Abdullah. Nehru reminded me that if an individual came in conflict with the head of a government, it was the individual who usually went. He told me that consequently it would be necessary for me to be posted away from Kashmir, though I would be kept as near it as possible. He then sent a letter to the Army Chief confirming this decision and sent me a copy. I left Kashmir[28]

26 I also reminded Nehru how till 1937 Abdullah was leader of communal groups in Kashmir and how suddenly seeing the writing on the wall and fearing that Congress might rule India one day, he had become a nationalist, overnight, when the first Congress Ministries came into power in 1938.

27 But Abdullah was removed under compelling national reasons five years later.

28 I must record here that Sheikh Abdullah rather than Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad should be held responsible for all that happened in Jammu and Kashmir during 1948. Actually, as time went on, Bakshi and Sheikh fell apart more and more. Bakshi either acquiesced with Abdullah on many matters under compelling circumstances, as others have done elsewhere or disagreed. The matters on which they acted together were few and far between.

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in October 1948. I had learnt much there in a war which had kept swinging like a pendulum and lived in a political situation with hardly any parallel.

On return from Kashmir, I was given command of the 11 Infantry Brigade at Jullundur in October, 1948. I had been away from Infantry—an arm to which I belonged and in which I had started service—for quite sometime. Though I had been held on the strength of the Army Service Corps, during this period, I had in the meantime, acquired experience in many military and other fields. For instance, I had attended a Staff College course at Quetta, done a spell of instructorship at the Intelligence School, Karachi, held a public relations assignment, done a staff job at the Army Headquarters, the Secretaryship of the Nationalization Committee, was Military Attache at Washington, and later Military Adviser with our Kashmir delegation at the Security Council at Lake Success, commanded a Motor Transport Battalion (during the Burma operations) and lastly, commanded many battalions of Militia (infantry) during the Jammu and Kashmir operations.

I had under me, a total of about 4,000 men, including 2 Mahratta, 1 Dogra, 2 Garhwal and the normal complement of supporting arms and services. My operational role was to defend a part of the Indo-Pakistan border between Ferozepur and Pathankot. Thrown in with this job was the privilege—for the first time—of flying a flag and displaying one star on the vehicle in which I travelled.

The first thing I did was to brush up my tactics and fully understand my operational task. For this I took numerous trips to the Indo-Pak border and then studied the relevant terrain. I made sure that my commanding officers did the same. I appreciated that apart from being well versed with minor tactics, it was essential for my troops to attain

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proficiency in shooting and be physically tough. I, therefore, took them out on progressive route marches till they managed to cover a distance of fifty-six miles —Jullunder to Beas and back—with only short halts in between. I made sure that I, and my officers, marched with them. I then concentrated on my brigade as a whole attaining a high standard in shooting and training. I did a number of exercises with or without troops in which, in addition to night operations and patrolling, I laid stress on the technique of various operations of war and important battle drills. I trained my troops to live on hard scale of rations, work in severe weather, and endure physical stress. We also practised how to improvise and meet with unexpected situations.[29]

After a few months, Maj Gen Sant Singh, who commanded 4 Infantry Division and under whom I served, selected me to stage a river crossing demonstration and, a little later, to give a demonstration with live explosives of how an infantry brigade should negotiate a mine-field. Amidst all this activity came the ceasefire in the operations in Jammu and Kashmir on 31 December 1948. Perhaps we accepted a ceasefire in the hope of gaining a mark internationally. Actually, the fire in Kashmir kept smouldering and giving us a constant pain in the neck. The world was to be peeved instead of being pleased with us.

A vast number of people had been killed, many rendered homeless and much devastation had occurred during the recent partition of the country. Whilst we had provided some—though indifferent—accommodation to army officers, most of our soldiers lived in peace stations without their wives and children as there was hardly any family

29 I also kept a strict eye on discipline, ceremonial drill, man-management, amenities and games.

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accommodation available for them. This disparity between my officers and men worried me. One evening I had gone out for a walk along with my wife and two children when a soldier saluted as he passed by. I stopped in order to 'chat' with him and asked where his family was. He said he had a wife and a child and they were back in his village. He had not lived with them now for seven years except during periods of leave. He went on active service in World War II in 1940 and returned only in 1947.

I felt a cad for living with my family merrily whilst the soldier to whom I spoke typified men under my—and others—command who were living without their families, having spent many years in isolated operational areas. A few nights later, I happened to read a book named *Fountainhead* by Ann Rand which related the story of the struggles of an architect. This gave me an idea of building a little township in which my men could live with their families happily. Though I knew little about building houses, surely I could make an attempt in my spare time. But when I worked out the details, I wondered with no money, no land, no means of any kind, how would I give my idea a practical shape? This thought kept me awake all night.

The next morning I collected all my commanding officers and put this proposition before them. They agreed that something should be done as they shared my problem also. We then decided to take immediate possession of a piece of land belonging to government which lay unused adjacent to my headquarters. The next thing we did was to procure the necessary material like cement, bricks, coal, sand, wood and glass. I made a team of workers from amongst my commanding officers without whose initiative and resourcefulness, I could have never accomplished this task.

I inscribed the following lines at the entrance of this colony, in honour of those officers and men of my Brigade who had lost their lives in World War II:

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TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO DIED SO
THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE

I built a common hall of worship for all religions—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians—on the lines of Akbar's Din-e-Illahi (Divine Faith) where I asked all communities in my brigade to celebrate each other's religious festivals, which brought them closer. On these days, the divines of their religions were to pray together as if their faiths were in harmony and not in conflict with each other. In the centre, amidst these structures, I erected an Asoka Pillar as a unifying symbol for all religions which was carved out for me by an expert in Delhi.

I called this project 'Jawanabad' which meant abode of the ordinary soldier. I was not prepared to give it the name of a prominent politician or a high military commander, which was and still is the practice in our country to please the big-wigs. I named various roads in this colony after those who had been killed during World War II whilst serving in this Brigade. I provided here an improvised hospital after consulting the World Health Organization so that I could give some medical attention to the families of my men. I provided them with other facilities such as a swimming pool and an open-air theatre. My aim was to make their life comfortable at no cost to themselves.

In doing all this, I acquired large bills to pay for which I had to raise some money. I therefore explored every possible way, including writing and staging plays, in order to do so and after much effort managed to make Jawanabad into a solvent colony.

I worked on this project in addition to doing drill, training and musketry. If our building activities interfered with our duties, I soon made up the time I had lost in the fields mentioned above, working overtime. For five months we worked ceaselessly in rain and sun, slaving round the clock.

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I was indebted to all ranks who had stood solidly behind me, like a rock, during the period I was facing numerous difficulties. I remember when I addressed four thousand of them on parade before I embarked on this project and asked them if I could rely on their support in what I was doing for their families, they raised their rifles high above their heads and with one voice echoed a spirited *yes*. I was heartened by this roar and now presented to them, at the end of five months of mutual toil, an accomplished mission.

Jawanabad had been built, though mostly of mud, by all ranks of 11 Infantry Brigade through grit, determination, *esprit de corps,* and devotion to a cause. Here were to live men, women and children of all castes and creeds as comrades, maintaining a decent standard of life, a standard below which no one should be allowed to live in our country. I had tried to build an India of our dreams on a miniature scale.

Nehru heard of Jawanabad and was particularly pleased to know about the hall of all religions we had built. He asked me over for a meal and told me, among other things, for instance, how important it was for us to win the friendship of the Muslims who, apart from India, lived in large numbers in Russia, China, Middle East, Afghanistan, Indonesia and Pakistan; and were a community we could not ignore.

Maj Gen Abdul Rehman, Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner at Jullundur was an old friend of mine. When tension was mounting between our two countries, he was naturally concerned about the safety of his family and asked me that, in the event of war, if I would ensure the safe evacuation of his family from Jullundur to Pakistan. This I promised to do.

During the partition, several women of Pakistan and India found themselves separated from their families and

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were stranded on either side of the border and were anxious to be restored to their lawful homes. Both States were trying to solve this ticklish problem but their progress was much too slow. In the meantime, the separated persons were getting restive.

One other rank serving under me came up to me one day and asked if I could help in retrieving his young bride who had been left in Pakistan (and for whom he was pining). As all official steps had failed so far, I asked Abdul Rehman if he could do something in the matter unofficially and use his diplomatic immunity to good purpose. He said he would do what was possible but that it was not a matter which could be easily arranged. I then gave him a letter for Maj Gen Akbar Khan, D.S.O., my erstwhile colleague at Sandhurst and now Chief of the General Staff of the Pakistan Army, to say that he should help Abdul Rehman in something he would explain personally. I thought this would strengthen Abdul Rehman's hands to accomplish the mission.

Abdul Rehman went to Lahore armed with my letter but could not meet Akbar Khan, as the latter had, a day before, been arrested for an attempt to capture political power in Pakistan through an abortive coup. Abdul Rehman promptly came back to Jullundur, told me, in hushed tones, what had happened to Akbar Khan and that he had already destroyed the undelivered letter. In the circumstances, I could not possibly press Abdul Rehman to do anything further in the matter.[30]

30 There are some cases where I had tried to help my men or their families but failed. There were, of course, others in which I had better luck. For instance, there was the case of Lance Naik Piara Singh, who complained of pain in his tooth. When the doctors decided to take it out and were in the process of doing so, due to some mishap, he bled to death. I only heard of this case when his young widow came to see me soon after he died. She or her late husband had no surviving relations as they had all been killed in the partition riots. She had none to whom she could turn and sought my help in her dark hour. After some effort, I managed to collect, through the generosity of many friends, over ten thousand

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I had heard earlier on reliable authority that Maj Gen Akbar Khan was convinced that the only way to solve the mounting problems of Pakistan was to have a military dictatorship. He had become a heroic figure in public eye after leading Pakistan troops bravely in the Kashmir War, disguised as General 'Tarikh'. He, therefore, thought of staging a *coup d'etat*. The pattern of his attempt was as follows.

Among his informal discussions with Service officers, he used to pose to them various solutions to the deteriorating state of affairs in Pakistan. When some agreed with him and voiced their sentiments with feeling and if he decided that they were genuine victims, he would take these officers to a 'sacred' chamber in his own house for an 'enlistment' ceremony. The atmosphere in this room was 'inspiring' and solemn. On the wall hung an enlargement of Jinnah, the Father of Pakistan. Just below lay a *Quran*. The candidates had to take an oath of allegiance by kissing the holy book under the shadow of Jinnah. They then signed a register with their own blood which made them full-fledged members of the clan and as they went out, they were presented with a red rose. This was a colourful ritual indeed. But the hands of democracy prevailed, the aspiring dictator came to grief before he struck and was apprehended one fine morning several days before he proposed to arrest the whole Pakistan Cabinet.

I was appointed a member of a Court of Inquiry to investigate certain charges against a senior Army officer. He was alleged to have sent exaggerated reports during the Kashmir operations to his higher authorities to the effect that his garrison was heavily pressed by the enemy and that he was fighting a grim battle. On another occasion he sent a situ-

rupees for her. From this sum, I bought her a modest house and opened a savings account with the balance. I found her employment and even tried to get her married again as she was only twenty-three but in vain.

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ation report[31] of the heavy losses he had inflicted on the enemy, but his superiors later found by visiting the ground that no evidence was available to support this claim. This officer later complained of the shortage of troops (as his defences were not suitably organized) and demanded reinforcements when in fact he was superior to the enemy in strength, having admitted this fact in one of his appreciations earlier. He exaggerated his own achievements and played down those of his subordinates.

This garrison survived many enemy onslaughts because of the individual heroism of the bulk of our officers and men and because of its comparative impregnability owing to the commanding position of the surrounding hill features which were in our hands.

When this officer was appointed the head of civil and military authority in that garrison, his reign was certainly not benevolent. He was residing in the lap of luxury whilst his troops lived in bunkers under fire. The owner of the mansion in which this officer lived had kept in it cash and other valuable personal effects including jewellery which he could not take out because of the sudden outbreak of the war. When he came to know this, he showed undue interest in the property which he was supposed to protect. He gave gay parties here to all visiting dignitaries in which drink flowed till late hours of the night. In addition, he was alleged to have committed some other irregularities.

Fate had afforded this officer the unique opportunity of commanding a body of fine men in adverse circumstances where the lives and welfare of many depended on his

31 I am constrained to mention that there were numerous instances of officers during the Kashmir operations who sent up to higher authorities situation reports which were exaggerated. There was a tendency to enlarge upon what actually happened, to one's credit. There were cases where officers got specific orders from their higher commanders but found many lame excuses for not obeying them implicitly. I also saw certain commanders playing up to the politicians, often to the detriment of military interests.

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men with credit but he missed this chance. He was later court-martialled for one of the irregularities he had committed and dismissed.

Relations between Pakistan and India were steadily deteriorating for sometime mainly because of the Kashmir question. The smallest incident on the border used to flare up into a major affair. Things had come to such a pass due to vacillation on our part. Though most countries do *not* bring their domestic issues before the U.N., we chose to do so. This international forum sidetracked the main issue of Pakistan being the aggressor and kept on discussing this case *ad nauseum* equating both India and Pakistan as parties to a dispute. This only helped to embitter our relations further.

In 1951 we had ample evidence that Pakistan had massed their armed forces along our borders in the Punjab. As in Kashmir, they were making provocative moves here also. Their intention appeared to be to ignite a war or to create panic. If Pakistan had contrived to take initiative, they might have had some initial success and come up to Amritsar or elsewhere in either flank. If we had taken an initiative against Pakistan in the Punjab at this juncture, we had a sporting chance of getting away with it. Such an opportunity may not arise again. But we remained on the defensive and deployed our Forces from Ferozepore to Pathankot, without moving ahead anywhere. On the other hand, if we had taken the initiative, (and there was enough provocation for us to do so) we might have captured Lahore, the nerve-centre of their rail and road communications, apart from its importance politically and economically. Lahore was only sixteen miles north of the Indo-Pak border posts of Attari-Wagah, as was Amritsar in the south. So the first objectives for both sides in the event of hostilities, lay within their grasp. My brigade was well-

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trained and was prepared to meet its operational responsibilities.

In the situation, as portrayed above, we might have had to cross the Ichhogil canal which lay between Wagah, north of our border, and Lahore. As it was an important impediment, I thought I should make it my business to study its details minutely. Various descriptions of it were available to us. I, therefore, went to the village Ranian located on our side of the border but near the Ichhogil canal to get as many details about this impediment as possible. I arranged to send agents who knew this area intimately to find out its breadth, depth, speed of current, its slopes and whether they were made of concrete as also what lay on both sides of this water obstacle. According to the information thus obtained and as described by at least one foreign magazine and as given by our own sources, the Ichhogil canal was between 110 and 120 feet wide, about 15 feet deep, had concrete and steep slopes, with its approaches and exits suitably mined at selected points. I then got a life size model made of a section of this canal based on the information I had collected, had its exact replica dug near my area and had it filled with water taken from an adjoining canal, an effort which no one has repeated since, in that area, which kept me and my men busy for days at a stretch. I did this so that all concerned could become familiar with the problems this canal presented and negotiate this life-like model, rehearsing their roles realistically rather than on paper. I practised taking across it men, weapons and material. This gave us considerable confidence for a possible task we might have had to face one day. This was nearly fifteen years ago.

Later in the training season, I was appointed 'Pakistan's Commander-in-Chief' in a sand model exercise and asked to appreciate the operational situation from her point of view. It was interesting playing these war games where I had to put myself in the shoes of our opponent.

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The tension between Pakistan and ourselves abated in 1952. Our formations were withdrawn from our border and peace prevailed once again. My brigade was shifted to the salubrious hill station of Kasauli and I was posted to the Army Headquarters soon after.

In my three and a half years' command of 11 Infantry Brigade[32] I had managed to create a strong team which was disciplined, united, well-trained operationally, with a spirit of patriotism in all ranks.

I came to Army Headquarters as Director of Organization. After a few months, when I was officiating as the Adjutant General, in place of Maj Gen J.N. Chaudhuri, General Cariappa, my army chief, told me that he had written a letter to a certain Weekly in Delhi to say that it had published a distorted version of what he had said somewhere on the subject of the Indian National Congress and that it should publish a contradiction. He further told me he wished he had not written to this paper as the Government now wanted him to sue it. The problem, therefore, was whether we could withdraw that letter so that he could file a suit as desired by the Government. I therefore thought that I should try and withdraw that letter somehow. I, along with Pandit Devi Dutt and Captain Varior, went to the office of this Weekly. As the editor was away, someone sitting in his chair, returned to us, without any fuss, Carriappa's letter when we asked for it. We then rushed back to the Army Headquarters with the letter which, if not withdrawn, would have embarrassed our innocent C-in-C. Thereafter a suit was filed against the editor and after a number of hearings he got away with an apology.

32 During this period when the Army H.Q. asked for volunteers for the Parachute Brigade, I submitted my name but did not hear back. Later, Maj Gen S. P. P. Thorat, the then C.G.S. offered me, in writing the post of Director of Military Intelligence on his staff at the Army H.Q. which I declined with thanks, as I was anxious to continue serving, as long as I could, in an active brigade.

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Brigadier R.B. Chopra, my neighbour on Kushak Road in Delhi fell seriously ill in 1952. When I went to see him in the military hospital, I found his wife in tears as the doctors had decided to remove him to Aundh near Poona and excise a portion of his lung which was found to be infected. His condition was so precarious that a journey by air, which might be bumpy in parts, was ruled out. He was, therefore, to be taken by train from Delhi to Poona via Bombay. But the timings were so awkward that the Frontier Mail from Delhi was scheduled to reach Bombay a few minutes *after* the train to Poona had departed and wait for the next train, which meant losing much valuable time. When I saw Mrs. Chopra at her wits' end, I took this matter in my hand. There was no way of solving it conventionally. The Frontier Mail would never be allowed officially, to reach Bombay before its schedule. I, therefore, decided to take Brigadier Chopra to the train at Delhi and try a last minute expedient, which might work. I saw the engine driver, told him the compassionate situation, offered him a bottle of whisky, as a token of appreciating his assistance in advance and asked him if he could run the train so fast on the last lap non-stop run from Igatpuri to Bombay, a stretch on which there is scope for making time, as to reach there half an hour before the scheduled time. He took a little time to grasp this unusual request and then sportingly agreed 'to do his best'. True to his word, he reached Bombay, 30 minutes before the scheduled time of the train's arrival, where I arranged for Chopra to be put in the Poona train by Maj Gen Daulet Singh, the local Area Commander. Chopra thus reached Poona and then Aundh in time for a successful operation by the distinguished chest surgeon, Colonel Chak[33] and made a speedy recovery.

33 Chak also operated on my son-in-law skilfully in 1962.

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Whilst I was still officiating as Adjutant General I received a message from the Ministry of Defence, that they wanted a certain officer transferred from one branch of the army to the other.[34] I said this was not possible as this officer had a record of service which was not above reproach. The Army Chief Rajindrasinghji sent for me the next day and said he had received a similar message from the Ministry in regard to this case and whether I could do something. When I told him why I could do nothing, he was good enough not to press me any further. When Chaudhuri came back, on being approached by the Ministry he also asked me if I could help in this matter. Since I had heard him often say in military circles that he never succumbed to recommendations from Government at the cost of professional interests, I reminded him of his own maxim and said I was not prepared to accept any pressure on this point. He said that he was the Adjutant General and that I should carry out his instructions. Upon this I pointed out that I also held a position of some responsibility, was not merely 'his master's voice' and therefore was not inclined to carry out an order which was against the interests of our service. Chaudhuri then left the matter there.

A little later, Chaudhuri, as Chief of the General Staff, put up a proposal to Government—which he persuaded his Army Chief to agree—that out of a total of the two armoured brigades which we had then, we should keep only one. This was supposed to save some money, a popular step with Government then. Whatever arguments he had in mind, he could never convince his colleagues in the Armoured Corps, who somehow heard of this proposal, that this step would be of much professional advantage to us. In fact they thought it would deplete our 'punch'—or striking power—at a time when

34 Transfers from one arm to the other had to be referred to the Adjutant General's Branch.

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instead of indulging in a scheme whose advantage was to show to Government some economy, he should have asked for an increase in our armoured strength (which was to play such an important part in the Indo-Pakistan war in 1965).

About this time, the Defence and the Finance Ministries imposed a cut in military rations as they were 'supposed to contain too many calories', a step which did not go down in the army and in which the military High Command need not have acquiesced. (The rations had to be normalized and this measure cancelled a few years later.)

Prem Bhatia, then on the *Statesman's* Staff, told me sometime in 1953 that Chaudhuri was the Military Correspondent of the *Statesman*. When I asked Chaudhuri whether what I had heard was true, he was taken aback and wondered who told me. When I named Prem Bhatia, Chaudhuri exclaimed: 'Bhatia had no business telling you this!'

The point of the above examples is to show that there were some Generals who even during 1952-54 were placating politicians and other dignitaries and indulging in certain activities not in conformity with service traditions and military etiquette.

Nehru put me to assist[35] in the late Ambassador Asif Ali's funeral in Delhi, as he knew I had served on his staff at Washington and had known him for long. When I was trying to control the mammoth crowds in the city and had frozen all vehicular traffic from a certain approach, an important politician's car was held up in the process. Because I had told all concerned to make no exceptions, he failed to get any change out of those who had done this. He abandoned his car and pushed his way through

35 Which the Chief Commissioner, Delhi was already organizing.

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the crowds up to me and demanded irately that I should let his car through as he was on an urgent mission. I told him nothing was more urgent at the time than Asif Ali's funeral and I could not possibly make an exception because if I did so, it would result in chaos. There are some men in India who expect two codes of discipline: one for the others and the second for themselves, who, they think, due to their status, are immune from all restrictions in life. When Nehru heard of this incident later, he remarked that such men were only a reflection of the conditions in our country and that we could neither deport them elsewhere nor import others instead but had to make do with them to the best of our ability.

Mr. Mohamed Ali, Pakistan's Prime Minister and his wife were coming to Delhi in 1953 at our invitation. Nehru had announced this fact publicly and so big crowds were expected to greet him at the airport. Arrangements on such occasions used to collapse due to spectators' indiscipline. This time Nehru said he would set an example of how the public should behave and asked me to work up an organization at Palam, making sure that nothing went wrong. Nehru agreed with me that everyone including the VIPs should arrive at Palam ten minutes ahead of the scheduled arrival of Mohamed Ali's plane. He also agreed that he would let me enforce this rule without exception. I accordingly gave orders to the troops and the airmen who were under my charge that ten minutes before the Pakistan Prime Minister's plane was due to land, they should stop anyone from entering the airport, as this would prevent a last minute rush, which often resulted in chaos. Two senior members of the Cabinet, however, used to be late on such occasions. As I thought they might be late on this occasion also and if allowed an entry then, many others would follow suit, thus breaking down the traffic arrangements. I told my men on duty to make no exceptions to any late comers, draw up a cordon and prevent them from

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entering the tarmac at Palam. Sure enough, they fetched up *not* ten minutes ahead of time but only just as the plane was touching down and were duly stopped at the entrance. Whilst no disrespect was meant by me to either of these dignitaries, I was only trying to keep the crowds in check on this occasion, specially when Nehru had agreed. I knew that once the cordon of men was breached, even in a single place, the pressure of the crowds behind would result in its complete breakdown and many others would rush in through this breach. But when Nehru heard that these two dignitaries were held up by us outside the cordon, he ordered that they should be let in at once. As soon as this happened, thousands of people who were waiting to get in, surged forward like a huge wave, which no one could stop. Pandemonium therefore reigned supreme much to the annoyance of all concerned.

The crowds in India sometimes do not know for whom they have assembled and simply love foregathering. As Mohamed Ali emerged from his plane, a great stampede took place. Whilst most people shouted 'Mohamed Ali Zindabad', there were some who shouted, without knowing what his name was: 'Liaqat Ali Zindabad!' This was ironical, as Liaqat Ali, Mohamed Ali's predecessor, had been murdered sometime ago and some people in this crowd were shouting for the wrong man.

(When Khrushchev came to Delhi in 1960, he was welcomed like many other dignitaries. In fact, each time the President or the Prime Minister of a country came to India, he was given an equally rousing reception by us, lining up the route from Palam to Connaught Place, Delhi[36] , in thousands. The visitor, therefore, took pride in his supposed popularity in this country, not realizing that the crowds collected here on all sorts of occasions. When Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy came in 1961, I asked a villager who had gone to Palam, along with the vast crowds,

36 Or similarly in Bombay, Calcutta or Madras.

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as to whom he had come to see. He said naively he was not quite sure but had heard rumours that a beautiful foreign Rani had come to India! Similar multitudes assembled to receive Chou En-Lai, Eisenhower and Queen Elizabeth. Khrushchev's arrival was no exception. In the dull lives of many of our countrymen, one such occasion was as great a *tamasha* as the other.)

I went to a recruiting rally where thousands of villagers had flocked from all sides to greet and hear a certain politician. They had hoped he would say something on behalf of the new National Government as a result of which their poor lives would improve. But his speech contained nothing new. They had heard elsewhere what he said that day, the gist of which was that every Indian should stand solidly behind his Government so that India could become strong. Once the speech was over and the conventional cheers had died down, a grey-haired old man staggered up to his feet and said he was prepared to give his all to the new Indian Government and prayed that though he may lose his arm one day, his sword in that arm may always remain intact at the service of his country. He said he was glad to hear what their new Government expected its citizens to do. But there were certain things the citizens had a right to expect their Government to do also. Had the Government no duty towards its citizens, he asked? Should it not provide them with the essentials of life such as food, shelter and clothing. They also had no school, no hospital and no road. These were their basic needs of which they had been short for some years. He should go back and tell the Government that unless they provided them with these amenities, few would be behind them. Saying this, or words to that effect, the old man disappeared in the multitude.

It was customary for me to interview all those who happened to be working under me and were in some trouble so that I could help them if possible. In this process a clerk

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told me that he was getting a small salary with which he was finding it difficult to make both ends meet and pay for his rent, food, clothing, children's education and to meet with his medical bills, during the course of any illness. He went on to say that his wife had been ill for several months, but he was unable to consult a doctor or afford the cost of medicines. Life had become such a problem to him that he had to remove his two grown-up, attractive daughters from a school as he could not afford fees for their education. I was touched to hear his tale of woe and took immediate action. I persuaded a senior military physician, whom I knew, to go and see this unfortunate woman, who lay without any medical attention. The doctor was a gentleman and obliged. He gave her medicines from the stocks which he officially kept in his own dispensary. When the clerk's wife had the luxury of expert medical attention and proper medicine, all on the house, she made a speedy and complete recovery. I knew I had broken one or two rules but not for an unjust cause. I then had his daughters trained in a firm named 'Gestetners' after which I got them suitable jobs. The family once again started leading a decent life.

As the year 1953 progressed, Sheikh Abdullah began making private statements which implied that the Kashmir problem should be solved to the satisfaction of India, Pakistan and Kashmir. This was the first time he brought in the necessity of Pakistan agreeing to such a solution. His utterances in fact amounted to saying that Kashmir should have an independent status. Abdullah also began airing against India all sorts of imaginary grievances and became generally belligerent. These utterances disturbed Nehru who wrote to Abdullah accordingly. The latter, however, reiterated what he had said earlier. Nehru then sent Maulana Azad to Srinagar on the *Id* day in the hope that he would be able to persuade Abdullah to adopt a more reasonable attitude. When Azad heard a most

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inflammatory and hostile speech against India which Abdullah delivered in Srinagar that day, he came back to Delhi firmly convinced that the latter was not amenable to any logic.

About the middle of July, D. P. Dhar saw the Prime Minister in Delhi and apprised him of the disturbed political atmosphere which then prevailed in Kashmir. Nehru rang up Minister Rafi Ahmed Kidwai—the strong man of his cabinet—and asked him to see D. P. Dhar urgently. When Kidwai and D. P. Dhar met the next morning, the former, after hearing the whole story, made the following two terse comments :

(a) Kashmir was a vital border state where things should not be left in the hands of one man or a particular group of men as anything that happened there was bound to have vast repercussions all over India.

(b) Time had come for Sheikh Abdullah to be removed.

Kidwai asked D.P. Dhar what would Abdullah's reactions be if he wrote to him that they should both meet. Knowing how sensitive Abdullah had become, D.P. Dhar said he was not sure of his reactions but suggested that Kidwai should not ask Abdullah to come to Delhi but offer to visit Srinagar himself for such a meeting. Kidwai wrote to Abdullah accordingly but the latter replied that not only no useful purpose would be served by Kidwai meeting him, but that if Kidwai attempted to 'conciliate' in the matter, his reputation in the country might be sullied. Kidwai rang up Abdullah and told him not to worry about his reputation and that they should have an opportunity of thrashing this matter out mutually. Abdullah, however, was adamant and did not agree that they should meet. Kidwai was naturally peeved at Abdullah's pernicious attitude and saw D. P. Dhar in Delhi on or about 25 July. D. P. Dhar once again brought to the notice of Kidwai the great tension which

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prevailed between the various leaders in Kashmir and the unsatisfactory state of affairs generally. Later D. P. Dhar met Pandit Nehru and Kidwai together in order to find ways and means of solving the present tangle. Nehru asked what the solution of the problem was. Kidwai remained silent but D. P. Dhar suggested that strong measures alone could deal with the situation effectively. Nehru then showed D. P. Dhar the latest letter he had received from Abdullah which raised the following points, among others:

(a) The autonomous position of Kashmir was being eroded by India, which had resulted in great dissatisfaction among the Kashmiris,

(b) He was too busy to come to Delhi to discuss the question of Kashmir with Nehru (the latter had made such a suggestion),

(c) Though he respected Nehru personally, there were occasions in human affairs, when the interests of the country had to take precedence over personal relationship.

When D. P. Dhar said nothing on reading this letter, Nehru showed it to Kidwai and asked for his comments. Kidwai told Nehru to act on what Abdullah had said in the letter himself, i.e., that national interests should be paramount in which individuals did not matter. (He suggested in effect that Nehru should deal with Abdullah strongly.)

Kidwai and D. P. Dhar met on leaving Nehru's residence and agreed that strong action must be taken in Kashmir, if necessary. When D.P. Dhar pointed out that Nehru preferred moderation in these matters, Kidwai assured him that he would settle this with the Prime Minister.

D. P. Dhar suggested to Kidwai and later to Nehru that I should be sent to Kashmir to assist him and his colleagues in dealing with the situation. Nehru was already apprehensive of Kidwai and D. P. Dhar's intentions but when he heard my name, he had a lurking fear that this combination might take arbitrary and unilateral actions with which he might well not see eye to eye. He, therefore, hesitated first

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but on being pressed, agreed to send me to Kashmir, though unofficially. D.P. Dhar, after buttoning up these arrangements returned to Srinagar and kept Kidwai in the picture constantly thereafter.

As I had a tiring day in my office in late July 1953, I thought I would go home early. Before I could pack up, however, I got a telephone message to say that Prime Minister Nehru would like to see me at once. When I went to meet him in his External Affairs office, he said he had called me in my private capacity and that this talk was off the record. He then asked if I knew what exactly was happening in Kashmir at the time. I replied I only knew what I read in the papers and thought the situation seemed, to say the least, confused. He agreed and said the main problem was to strengthen and stabilize Kashmir[37] internally. If this was done, he said, no amount of external pressure could shake India's position there.

Nehru then described how disturbed the general atmosphere in Kashmir was, how the Yuvraj and Sheikh Abdullah, as also Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, his deputy, had grave rifts between themselves. Sheikh Abdullah had suddenly firmed up his attitude towards India. He had never shown this sort of arrogance in the past. Sheikh Abdullah was also raising many other issues. Nehru said he had received many disquieting reports from Kashmir. He had, of course, asked his normal civil agencies to keep him informed of the developments there, but, all the same, he said he would like me to go to Kashmir on a few days' 'leave', observe, on his behalf, the trend of events and keep him informed. He said that it would be a good thing if I could be in Kashmir at this juncture.

37 A little earlier Nehru had said, 'About Kashmir our attitude has been made perfectly clear and we are not going to budge from it... It should be made clear to everyone concerned that in this matter we cannot submit to any further bullying.' And, a little later, Krishna Menon said, 'If our stand on Kashmir is not understood, it is no good finding fault with our transmission apparatus; something must be wrong with the receiving end!'

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I took ten days' leave from the Army Chief and landed in Srinagar. Nehru had rung up all concerned that I was coming. I had gone to Kashmir without an official status. I stayed in Srinagar with Maj Gen Hiralal Atal and paid a courtesy call on the Sheikh soon after my arrival. During our dialogue, he voiced various complaints against India and said the fate of Kashmir should be decided by its people who might like to opt neither for India nor Pakistan but be independent. When I asked him whether he had considered what the fate of forty million Muslims in India would be, in case Kashmir became independent, he said this was not his business! He warned that if India did not stop interfering with affairs in Kashmir, he would have to resort to other methods. He ended up by saying that India must remember that he was not known as the 'Lion of Kashmir' for nothing!

This left no doubt in my mind that I was talking to a militant Abdullah. At one time he stood in the public eye as a popular leader. But slowly, through his excesses in administration, indiscriminate injustice and nepotism, another image had now emerged. He appeared ruthless, haughty, and the people were losing faith in him. They strongly resented Nehru's continued support to one who was toying with the lives of innocent Kashmiris. Complaints had been received against his personal behaviour, and there were many charges amounting to favours which he had received and granted.

Abdullah seemed to be showing neither the will nor the purpose to alleviate the extreme conditions of poverty and distress among the people. In order to divert their attention, Abdullah had raised political issues and called accession to India 'dangerous' when he had himself been the architect of this idea earlier. It was the strength of the people which gave self-Government to a country. It was the same strength which had stayed the unprovoked attack from across the border in 1947. And it was the same people, who decided to

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form a government over the head of which they placed Abdullah. It was through him that they expected reforms at home and an honourable discharge of the pledges given. The onus of all this fell on the Premier who as the head of government had all the initiative in his hands. The flow of events, however, unfolded a totally contradictory picture. At home, Abdullah had failed and far from improving had worsened the economic plight of the people. He had failed to root out bribery and corruption which grew under his aegis. He made no headway in the implementation of land reforms or the removal of poverty amongst the peasantry. Nor did he make any effort to improve the educational and cultural life of the populace which continued to remain illiterate and ignorant as if a people's government had never been established. Against this sad and discreditable record, Abdullah began to show positive signs of going back on his own political professions.[38]

Such a state of mismanagement could not be allowed to go on. It was therefore not extraordinary, in the circumstances, for such a leader to be dethroned Such an event in the progress towards democratization was inevitable. When it is found that a democratic State can no longer sustain the pattern of life it seeks, it must amputate what is rotten and pernicious for the health of the populace. That is what happened in Kashmir. Abdullah was being criticized because of his incapacity to promote a satisfactory life for his people; also for his inability to exterminate the feudal system which was strangling the people and for being unable to chase out the curse of illiteracy and poverty. Finally, he showed total incompetence to raise the standard of life of the common man which should have been his foremost occupation.

38 Above all, the law and order machinery broke under him and chaos and confusion prevailed throughout J and K.

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Opposition was also mounting in the Indian public as to why Kashmir should be given any special privileges which Abdullah demanded when they were not shared by other States. It was being asked why Abdullah should be allowed to ride rough-shod over public sentiment and why the Central Government should permit him such a long rope, despite his blatant defiance and gross maladministration.

I had long discussions with Bakshi and D. P. Dhar, and the enlightened young ruler, Yuvraj Karan Singh. They all corroborated how difficult the Sheikh had become in his dealings lately. After some discussion, we surmised that perhaps he had something up his sleeve. Mystery surrounded his activities during the next three days but we continued our watching brief. D. P. Dhar and Bakshi told me they had heard Sheikh was going to Gulmarg, a place about an hour's drive from Srinagar, in a few days' time to meet certain 'friends' from across the border which was only seven miles away and, after clearing up some points with them, proposed arresting Bakshi, Dhar and some others on trumped-up charges. He would then replace them by suitable henchmen and fortify his own position within the Cabinet. Finally, he would make a statement before a press gathering declaring Kashmir as independent and asking India (what about Pakistan?) to withdraw its forces from there. This would 'settle' the problem in his own way.

Yuvraj, Bakshi, D. P. Dhar and I burned midnight oil studying this grave and explosive situation. We finally came to the conclusion that time had come for strong action against Abdullah. If he was allowed to declare Kashmir independent specially when it had already acceded to India, voluntarily, there was no guarantee that another power would not come from across the border in this vacuum and make plausible excuses for having done so. This had happened in 1947[39] when Kashmir

39 As also in 1965.

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was invaded and 'good' reasons given for it, as if invading a foreign territory can ever be justified.

In spite of our analysis, we felt that the situation which now prevailed in Kashmir should be brought to the notice of Nehru, before we went any further. As it was not possible to discuss such delicate matters over the telephone, it was decided that I should take a trip to Delhi at once.

It was getting dark and the weather was stormy over the Banihal Pass. This was no time or weather in which to fly. Flt Lt Gama warned me of treacherous weather but on my insistence to go the same evening, volunteered to fly me to Delhi. We took off soon after six on 2 August 1953. When we were over the Banihal Pass, we ran into turbulent clouds and after encountering extremely stormy[40] weather and torrential rain, we managed to land at Delhi later that night, thanks only to the skilful and courageous flying of Gama.

I went straight from the airport to Nehru's residence and lost no time in relating to him the situation as it stood. I told him how Abdullah was anxious to evolve a pattern by which he could bargain both with India (and with Pakistan?) and how cocky he had become, thinking he held the balance in his hands and could dictate his own terms. After hearing me, Nehru said whatever the Yuvraj, Bakshi and D. P. Dhar had decided to do with Abdullah, the latter should not be arrested, under any circumstances, as we would never be able to explain such action to the world satisfactorily. I pointed out to him the dangers to India's position if Abdullah was allowed to continue having a free hand in Kashmir and succeeded in arresting Bakshi, D. P. Dhar and some other Ministers on a flimsy excuse, but Nehru stuck to the point he had made. I promised to convey what he had said to all concerned in Kashmir.

40 Due to adverse atmospheric conditions, the main controls of the plane went out of order temporarily, when Gama flew by intuition, initiative and a large heart in conditions of navigation which were dangerous. I recommended him for an award which he did not get.

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I returned to Srinagar the next day and when I conveyed Nehru's views to Yuvraj, Bakshi and Dhar, they had varying reactions. We were in a vicious circle. If we told Nehru in advance that Abdullah was being arrested, we knew he would prohibit such a move. But a free Abdullah was threatening democracy in Kashmir, and was against our national interests. Arresting him, however, was contrary to Nehru's wishes though compelling under the situation. After some heated discussion, we all agreed that the time had come for Abdullah to go and, if he persisted in his proposed plans, he should, if necessary, be taken into custody, without reference to Nehru (though the Yuvraj kept pointing out the need to tell Nehru of this step first).

Just before going to Gulmarg, Sheikh Abdullah dropped in to see the Yuvraj, whom he had not met for some time. The young Ruler took this opportunity of bringing to Abdullah's notice the various instances of his maladministration and the need for him to watch his step. The Sheikh pretended to look hurt at these allegations which he refuted, but the Yuvraj reiterated them. The Sheikh then went to Gulmarg. Many members of the constituent assembly had already sent to him a written protest against his mishandling of the affairs of the State.

That afternoon, we had definite news that the Sheikh intended putting his plan, mentioned earlier, into action two days later. Bakshi and I met at D. P. Dhar's house and later at Yuvraj's in a tense atmosphere. Everyone was keyed up. It was decided, after weighing all the pros and cons of the situation, to arrest Abdullah on the night of 8 August as he had now become a positive danger to the law and order of the land. Delhi really did not know how grave the situation had become here.

In view of the possible repercussions many precautionary measures were taken by us. For instance, the power house at Mahura and the telephone exchange at Srinagar were secured as were vantage points in and around the city.

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L.D. Thakur, the Superintendent of Police and Sheikh Ghulam Qadir, Deputy Superintendent were despatched to Gulmarg to take Abdullah into custody, after another stalwart, Lt Col Baldev Singh of the Jammu and Kashmir State Forces, had handed over to him, earlier, his dismissal orders. The Sheikh was furious at first when he received these 'orders', shouting that no one dare do this to him, but later acquiesced, and, after saying his prayers and hearing the All-India Radio news, proceeded with his captors to Udhampur where he was to be detained. This was the morning of 9 August. The van, with its distinguished captive, left for its destination, in a veil of secrecy. But news of Abdullah's arrest had trickled out somehow. I stood five miles outside Srinagar, towards Gulmarg, and saw his van rushing past me and was present at the ceremony when Bakshi was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

There were some sporadic disturbances immediately after Abdullah's arrest. UN Observers' Teams, who should have been along the frontiers, were seen rushing around in their white jeeps, in Srinagar city. But Bakshi and Dhar dealt with these elements with a firm hand. I was an eyewitness to all these events and played whatever part I was asked in bringing peace and harmony in Srinagar and the Valley.

On 9 August, when Nehru rang up Yuvraj Karan Singh and blew him up for allowing Abdullah to be arrested, the latter, after hearing only a part of the outburst and being shaken by Nehru's blasting, handed over the telephone to A. P. Jain who had reached Srinagar by then. Jain not being able to take in the tirade all by himself, passed the phone over to D. P. Dhar. It was all over now bar the shouting.

Two days later, when I met Nehru in Delhi, he told me he was most annoyed that Abdullah had been arrested despite his orders to the contrary, but as days went by, and public approbation mounted in support of 'his' strong

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action in Kashmir in an inflammatory situation, he reconciled himself to what had happened and accepted this ironical compliment.

In Korean language, Korea is known as 'chosen', which means the land of the morning calm. Apart from the main peninsula, it consists of about 3,000 islands. The former (less the islands) is 600 miles long and 135 miles wide, with a total area of 85,000 square miles. Three-fourths of it is mountainous with its highest peak being 9,000 feet. Koreans are sturdy people with an ancient civilization and Christianity is their main religion. Korea became a Japanese possession in 1905 at the end of the Russo-Japanese War.

At the meeting of the allied leaders at Cairo in 1943, USA, China and UK declared that after World War II Korea would be made free. This promise was re-affirmed at Potsdam in 1945 and was agreed to by the USSR who said they would accept the Japanese surrender North of the 38th Parallel, USA agreeing to do so South of this line. The Russians, British and the Americans agreed in December 1945 that a temporary democratic government should be set up for the whole of Korea. This arrangement also suggested the establishment of a four-Power trusteeship in Korea for a period of five years. Owing to lack of agreement between the Americans and the Russians over the establishment of a joint Commission for creating a control body to govern Korea, this question was referred to the General Assembly of the United Nations who recommended in 1947 that the elections be held not later than March 1948 to choose Korean representatives for the establishment of a national government in Korea and that the occupation forces of the US and the USSR be withdrawn, if possible, within ninety days of the establishment of the Korean government. The General Assembly also proposed the appointment of a Commission to investigate the situa-

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tion in Korea and to make recommendations for the establishment of a nationalist government for the whole of Korea. The Russian member refused to vote on this resolution and did not agree to the entry of this Commission in North Korean territory. Its activities were, therefore, confined to South Korea. The United Nations decided to create a Republic of Korea (ROK) for the American Zone South of the 38th Parallel and chose Doctor Syngman Rhee as the new President of the ROK. The Russians, on the other hand, held elections in their zone in North Korea in August 1948 and also set up a Republic of Korea claiming authority over the whole of the peninsula. Korea thus became divided by the 38th Parallel under two governments with opposing ideologies. The USSR forces withdrew from Korea in December 1948 and the US forces in June 1949.

Syngman Rhee had threatened to invade North Korea. However, the North Korean troops forestalled him by crossing the 38th Parallel on 28 June 1950 and a war escalated between the two halves of the country in which USA and UK sent their forces to the aid of South Korea. On 6 November 1950, the UN forces under General McArthur, reported the presence of Chinese military units on the Korean front. This war raged furiously between the Communists consisting of North Korea and China, and the UN Command consisting of South Korea and sixteen[41] Allied nations including the UK and the USA. Four countries sent only medical units.[42]

Negotiations for peace began in November 1951. There were five main items on the agenda for discussion:

(a) The adoption of the agenda and the agreement to discuss it.

41 Australia, Belgium, Canada, Columbia, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, Union of South Africa, UK and the USA.

42 India, Italy, Norway and Sweden.

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(b) The demarcation of the Cease Fire Line.
(c) Supervision of the Armistice.
(d) Exchange of the prisoners.
(e) Recommendations.

There was no agreement on the number of prisoners held by each side. On 27 April 1952 both sides agreed to accept a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission for enforcing the provisions of the Armistice.

On 17 November 1952, India proposed a plan for the repatriation of the prisoners of war under the direction of a Four-Power Commission, including two Communist and two non-Communist nations, with an umpire named by the U.N. in case of a dead-lock. The Indian proposals were rejected by the USSR, China and North Korea. In March 1953, General Clark made a proposal for an immediate exchange of the seriously sick and wounded prisoners of war vide the Geneva Convention. The Communists agreed to this proposal. On 8 June 1953, both sides agreed that :

(a) A Neutral Nations Commission for supervising the repatriation of the prisoners of war to be composed of India, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland and Czechoslovakia be set up. This Commission was to take over Prisoners of War who were unwilling to be repatriated. The Chairman of the Commission was to be an Indian nominee.
(b) The armed guards for looking after these prisoners would be appointed by India alone.

On 27 July 1953, the Truce agreement was signed and the war in Korea came to an end, eight miles on the wrong side of the 38th Parallel, from the U.N.'s point of view. It had swung like a pendulum for over three years and had resulted in considerable casualties. India had played no small part in bringing about the cessation of these hostilities.

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The U.N. Command held 58,000 Chinese and North Korean prisoners in their custody and the Communists held, in turn, comparatively a very small number of British and American captives. According to the Western view, as the conditions in their homes under Communist rule were unbearable, none of the prisoners wanted to be repatriated. The opposite view was that most prisoners, except perhaps a few, after a protracted separation from their families, and after fighting a relentless war, would be anxious to go back home. The Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission was to determine from each prisoner whether he wished to be repatriated or go elsewhere. Before, however, this Commission had assembled in Korea, 35,000 out of 58,000 prisoners in U.N. custody 'escaped' after a mass break-out, leaving behind 23,000 of them to be disposed of. How such a large number of unarmed prisoners succeeded in escaping, amidst armed guards, is not easy to understand. Some wondered if they were not freed by Syngman Rhee.

Lt Gen K. S. Thimayya was chosen by India to represent her as Chairman of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC). Chakravarty went as the Alternate Chairman and P. N. Haksar along with Bahadur Singh, as political advisers. Lt Gen S. P. P. Thorat was to go as Commander of the Indian Custodian Force. I was nominated by Thimayya as his Chief of Staff.

Nehru sent for me before I left for Korea and explained various implications of the problem of prisoners of war confronting us then and how both USA and USSR were anxious to establish the rightness of their ideologies. They were bound to exert much pressure on us and it was, Nehru said, essential that we not only observed a strictly impartial attitude but also succeeded in giving an impression of doing so. As Chairman of the Commission, India would occupy a position of trust and must create a stabilizing atmosphere of impartiality around ourselves

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in this combustible situation and thus reduce the tension which existed internationally. He suggested we made an initial gesture by sending a message of goodwill to all prisoners. We should try and learn the Korean language as it would give the impression of our interestedness in their problem. He said there might be some prisoners not willing to go home; we should, therefore, start with a batch appearing to be willing to do so. He felt that as most prisoners were ordinary peasants, free from politics, and hence naturally anxious to get back home, we should treat them sympathetically. He suggested we should segregate prisoners who were objectionable and watch for their ring leaders. We might find them reluctant to give details of their antecedents to the interrogators. They should, in that case, be persuaded to do so. Nehru finally said if there was a dead-lock in any situation, we should try and solve it informally. As regards China, he said we were friendly with that country, as we were with others, and shared a long border with her. It would be unwise on our part, therefore, to antagonize a friendly neighbour unnecessarily. We should, in any case, take no sides but bear in mind our national policies.

With Nehru's advice dinning in my ears, I accompanied Thimayya and other members of our delegation from Delhi and landed in Japan in September 1953. After calling on General Mark Clark, Commander of the UN Forces, who was located in Tokyo, we continued our journey, to our billet at Pan Mun Jong. Syngman Rhee, South Korea's President, had no love lost for India and prohibited our landing on South Korean soil on our way to Pan Mun Jong. The UN got round this situation by landing us on one of their own zones and flying us to our destination.

On reaching Korea, I found that the Americans as well as the Chinese were on that soil minding someone else's business.

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When the NNRC[43] took over the custody of the Korean and Chinese prisoners from the UN Command, through the agency of our troops (of the Custodian Force India), we found the former to be extremely rowdy. Although this taxed the patience of our troops considerably, they kept their tempers admirably and remained quite unruffled. Lt Gen Thorat gave them orders not to retaliate and to take over these prisoners unarmed.

In the NNRC, the Swiss and the Swedes appeared committed to the United Nations stand, whereas the Czechs and the Poles to the point of view of the Northern Command. The need of India remaining impartial, therefore, became all the more important. The success or failure of the NNRC rested on the determination with which India played its role. Actually, we had inherited all the bitterness and antagonism of the two adversaries which was frozen at the time of the Armistice agreement but was unleashed on us as the only neutral power.

We selected what we thought a suitable site for erecting explanation tents where the Northern Command representatives could persuade prisoners, if they desired, to return to their homes. Much argument took place between the representatives of the two sides regarding the site where these tents were to be erected. The U.N. Command believed that odd mines still lay about in the proposed sites which were, therefore, dangerous for the purpose. The Northern Command held, however, that they were free from mines because I understood General Bryan had made a statement on behalf of the U.N. at Military Armistice Commission on 16 September 1953 to the same effect, generally. When discussion on this point became prolonged, extending over many days, I, along with many others, got tired of this endless talk without

43 The NNRC was the governing body whilst the CFI was to implement the decisions of the NNRC.

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any results. In order to terminate this controversy, I decided to walk through the area in dispute within the view of the representatives of both sides. If I managed to get across, unhurt, it would prove beyond any doubt that there were no mines. If, however, there *were* mines, I would not live to tell any tale. It was as simple as that. Crossing my fingers, and accompanied by Major Mark Valladares, a gallant and trustworthy Sapper, and a few others who agreed to come with me, I walked through the area in question with a mixed feeling. Each time I took a step, I wondered if I was stepping on a mine which would blow us up. But after a few minutes, which seemed an eternity, I found myself at the other end. We had no mishap on our return trip either after taking what amounted to just a calculated risk. All arguments ceased forthwith thereafter and we built the explanation tents on the site we had selected, without further fuss from any quarters.

I received an official invitation to visit Peking for which I sought Thimayya's and Nehru's permission. They both agreed. I was taken by my hosts from Kaesong near Pan Mun Jong by a special train via Sarewon and Pyongyong in North Korea, crossed the border at An-Tung, through Mukden (Shen-Yang) in Manchuria. Accompanying me were Bahadur Singh of the Foreign Service, Major H. S. Sandhu, my Staff Officer and three Indian journalists, G. K. Reddy, P. Abraham and Malkani. Bahadur knew China well and gave me invaluable advice all along. He was an able and an unassuming diplomat and knew various Chinese leaders personally. A Chinese Political Commissar, who—as it turned out later—knew Hindi well was with us on this journey. He always spoke to us through an interpreter and kept a poker face when we spoke all sorts of things in Hindi among ourselves in his presence throughout our journey; we did not suspect in the least that he understood every word of

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what we spoke! We reached Peking[44] on December 15, 1953 and were received on arrival by the Chinese officiating Chief of Protocol and some other officials as also by those of our own Embassy.

In Peking I was impressed to see the discipline and punctuality of the people, their educational and medical drive and the energetic way in which they were tackling their industrial, agricultural as also many other problems. On the other hand, I also saw that they enjoyed little liberty of speech and action and how seldom initiative was left with them. They invariably seemed to be referring matters to their superiors and fought shy of showing us certain aspects of their lives which were not complimentary to them.

When the Chinese Chief of Protocol asked me whom I wanted to see in Peking, I said I had no special preferences. He then arranged for me to call on Vice Foreign Minister, General Le Ka Nong and Premier Chou En-Lai. I saw the Chinese Prime Minister more than once. One of these interviews took place in the presence of our Ambassador in Peking, Raghavan, on 22 December 1953. Chou En-Lai stressed that I should personally convey the following points to Nehru:

(a) The U.S.A. wanted tension to continue in South East Asia for the following reasons:
  (i) To let them go on arming Japan and retain a large number of their troops in that area;
  (ii) To enable them to grant military aid to Pakistan on the plea of a communist threat in the East; and

(b) USA demanded that U.S.S.R. must participate in the Political Conference as if she were a belligerent and also the latter should guarantee peace in Asia, as though the Chinese People's Republic

44 Going through North Korea to Peking, we passed through a variety of terrain, countryside with neat and primitive villages, new and old townships, industrial areas with massive factories and two or three cities which seemed more modern than I had expected.

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could not do so. This indicated that USA did not want the Political Conference to come off.

(c) If U.S.A. made the mistake of embarking upon a war against the Chinese, they were ready for it and would 'give them a broken and a bloody head.'

Chou En-Lai also said he was disappointed at the manner in which the NNRC had functioned in Korea and had failed to find facts as they stood.

I suggested to Ambassador Raghavan after this interview that he should inform Prime Minister Nehru the gist of what Chou En-Lai had told me during this interview. He said he would.

Chou En-Lai reminded me on another occasion that China had a population of 600 million—out of the total of 2400[45] million in the world; he added that they were not afraid of the third world war as it would, in any case, establish a victory for the socialist forces in the world. He went on to say that if a few atomic bombs were to explode, whereas they could for instance destroy the whole of England, they would, on the other hand, only destroy a part of China and the balance, bigger than many Englands, was bound to remain intact. When I asked him if the Chinese revolution was in any way inspired by Russia, he flared up and said that no real revolutions were ever imported and that the Chinese revolution was, therefore, an indigenous affair, not imported from the USSR as many thought and that 600 million Chinese could not have been inspired by 200 million Russians.

Chou En-Lai said that as he welcomed criticism from visiting foreigners, he would like to ask me if I had any comments on my visit to China. I told him that whereas I was much impressed with many things I had seen, I wished to bring certain matters to his notice. For instance, when I invited some Chinese officers for dinner, they gave me no reply till the last minute whether they were dining with

45 A century hence the world may consist of 6000 million.

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me or not. When I wanted to see the Peking Radio Station, the officials who were to show me around kept me in suspense for long whether or not I could see this place. When I asked them to show me the slums in Peking, they said they would but actually did *not*. I asked Chou En-Lai whether they had to refer these matters to their superiors in each case. If they did not wish to show any sight or place to me, they should have made some plausible excuse instead of keeping me wondering till the last minute.

Chou En-Lai said he was sorry I had had this experience but must remember they were a young nation, still immature and like children. It was, therefore, necessary to impose many curbs on them. Their custodians must ensure that they do not speak or act unwisely during their adolescence. Curbs now imposed on them would be removed 'when they grew up'. (Though this did not seem to me a satisfactory reply to the observations I had made, I did *not* press the matter any further, out of *Kirchi* which is the Chinese equivalent of the word 'courtesy'.)

Chou En-Lai one day invited me, along with Bahadur Singh, to a luncheon at his residence. He spoke in Chinese through an interpreter but sometimes came out with odd words of English. When rounds of drinks started, celebrating the healths of Mao Tse Tung and Nehru, China and India, etc. Chou En-Lai insisted that I should keep him company in these *gambes* (bottoms up) of *mao tai* (Rice Wine). I told him Bahadur Singh would act as my worthy *dai biao* (Representative) for this purpose. After about fifteen consecutive *gambes,* Chou En-Lai felt groggy in his legs whereas Bahadur Singh remained as sober as a rock. This shook Chou's self-confidence, so far as drinking was concerned. He looked hard at Bahadur and asked in surprise :

'Where did you learn your drinking, Mr. Bahadur Singh?'

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Bahadur stood up and replied solemnly, with a glint in his eye :

'Your Excellency, we have been drinking hard in my Rajput family for seven generations. Drinking, therefore, runs in my blood!'

Chou En-Lai then gave up drinking further toasts and eating began without any more preliminaries. After this interesting visit to China, I returned to Pan Mun Jong, along with my Indian companions.

The Chinese were extremely stubborn to deal with the U.N. in Korea. Each time there was an argument around a table or in correspondence, they kept threatening the U.N. with 'serious consequences' and gave them endless warnings, counting on each occasion that it was the 176th, 239th, 456th warning and so on. This was their shock-tactics I suppose. The U.N. Command's favourite argument in Korea was that all prisoners in our custody hated Communism and were determined *not* to go back home for that reason.

We had drafted a fair set of rules of procedure for explanation. It was a pity, however, that these rules were not implemented. We could not impose our will on the prisoners who were under our custody because we wanted to deal with them, a rowdy gang, peacefully. They called us names, made false allegations against us, pelted stones on our passing cars and showed other signs of violence but we kept dealing with them gently rather than firmly, lest there be a mass break-out of prisoners. We took some of them to the explanation tents with difficulty whilst they shouted and assaulted our guards who were accompanying them. The others never went for explanations at all. Those who elected to go home after explanations were few and far between. We were unable to segregate ring leaders who had been planted amidst the prisoners to create disturbances in their camps and prevent the latter from seeking repatriation, terrorizing them by

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various means, including murder[46]; instead of being punished, they were offered privileges and permitted discussions on equal footing with some of us. We failed to stop them from signalling and sending illicit messages to each other under our very nose or to search suspicious characters; we were unable to restrict or stop the undesirable activities rampant in the U.N. hospital, or break up secret organizations among them generally. We could never get any lists prepared giving details of those prisoners who in quite a number of cases came to us without names. Consequently, many of them were smuggled into other compounds, and received explanations twice. Prisoners were allowed to carry sharp implements, knives and other articles with which they could attack and threaten. We allowed some of them to wear masks when coming for explanations as if they were circus clowns. We failed to investigate properly, arrest or inflict exemplary punishment on those who had detained certain Indian officers forcibly and who had committed grave acts of indiscipline or flouted our authority in any other way.

Some held the view that the problem of these prisoners (who had become pawns between two power blocs who in

46 In one instance, a murder had been committed by prisoners who resisted our troops from holding identification for suspects. I, therefore, volunteered to identify the culprits and if prisoners attempted a mass break-out—a favourite bogey—I said I would stop such an attempt. Thimayya accepted this offer. I went to the particular prisoners' camp and announced through a microphone that I required all prisoners to march past a 'chicken-run' to be identified peacefully, failing which, I said I would use force. At first, these bullies ignored what I said, thinking it was an empty threat. They created a noisy demonstration and tried to break out aggressively, despite orders not to do so. I promptly ordered my troops to open fire and had one or two of the prisoners shot dead. This drastic action had a stunning effect on them. Their ardour to break-out violently cooled off immediately. This only proved that if we displayed to them a token of our strength, without indulging in any 'mass murder', they would understand that we meant business, and would have carried out our orders. We, on the contrary, pampered them and consequently became prisoners of these prisoners, unable to achieve much.

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turn had irreconcilable differences) was insolvable and that no one could have dealt with it satisfactorily; that, therefore, whatever we had decided to do, would have been wrong from one or the other point of view; that we did not, in any case, have any experience in dealing with this sort of complicated problem of politically infected prisoners; and that if we had used force against these prisoners in solving the problem, it would be against what our country stood for; that in view of these considerations, we did as good a job as was possible under trying circumstances and that the credit went to Lt Gen K. S. Thimayya and Maj Gen S. P. P. Thorat for handling a delicate matter with great tact and perseverance.

The other view, with which P. N. Haksar, Bahadur Singh and I agreed was, that we had not succeeded in our mission in Korea, despite all the good work Generals Thimayya and Thorat did. I for one thought—based on Nehru's reading of the situation—that the question of the prisoners' repatriation was a human issue, whereas according to some others it was a political problem. In my view these prisoners, who had gone through the rigours of war for years, would like to be free and seek the comforting company of their kith and kin once again rather than stay in exile for ever.

Whatever India did as Chairman, NNRC was not in line with what she wanted to do according to her charter. Nehru also soft-paddled, agreeing with most of the NNRC's decisions and acquiescing in their over-all work.

(In my six-months stay in Korea, I had many occasions of meeting commanders of various armies and studied how they had fought certain interesting battles there during 1950-53. I learnt, among other things, that good patrolling, sound fire plans, improvisations generally but specially whilst negotiating water obstacles, effective concealment and camouflage, austerity in administration and bold leadership had paid them rich dividends during this war.)

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Nehru used to say that the future of democracy, at least in Asia, depended on whether the democratic India or the totalitarian China progressed faster and better. When, therefore, I saw him in Delhi on return from Korea, he told me he had heard that I had come back impressed with many things in China and if so, what had struck me most. I said that from what little I had seen, I thought China was going ahead at an alarming pace under a strong government. Many other dignitaries in India discussed this subject with me. Most[47] of them, whilst disagreeing with the ideology of China, as I did, took note of her strides in several fields. But there were others who did not believe that China could be making the progress she claimed. I, for one, was anxious that whereas we should not exaggerate the strength of a particular country, at the same time, it would not be in our interests if we under-estimated it wishfully.

I applied for long leave to get over the trying time I had had in Korea. This request was turned down and I was attached to the External Affairs Ministry, instead, for some months on special duty. Once Nehru asked me during this period, if I had met Chou En-Lai when I was in Peking. I enquired if he had not seen the report which our Ambassador at Peking was supposed to have sent to him about one of my interviews with Chou. When he denied having seen any such report, I gave him a copy of my memorandum on the interview Chou had had with me in the presence of our Ambassador, as also Bahadur Singh.

My interest in the North Eastern Frontier Agency was first evoked when I heard in early 1954 an extraordinary

47 For instance, General J.N. Chaudhuri, on returning from a visit to China wrote to me on 1 November 1956: '...I can tell you now that I have come away vastly impressed with what is going on in that great country...'

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narrative of how an Indian party had been wiped out there not long ago. NEFA was inhabited by many tribes and untouched by civilization for centuries. We were now slowly trying to strengthen our administration in that territory and doing what we thought was good for the enlightenment, development and progress of these people. It was in this endeavour that a patrol of Assam Rifles was going along the East bank of the Subansiri River beyond Daporijo to establish a civil post in unexplored territory. After going over treacherous terrain for some miles, they were nearing a site near Ashimori, where they were due to rest for the night, when they were spotted from a distant observation post by Tumsa Dusak, the local Thagin chief, who was alarmed to see the 'advancing' party. He could not comprehend who they could be and had no recollection of anyone ever having encroached upon his 'domain' before. He therefore feared these men had 'evil' intentions on what he thought was his 'territory' and hastily sought advice from his counsellors who were unable to throw any light on this 'threat' or its possible origin. After much deliberation, they decided that since they could muster up enough men, they should play a ruse and dispose of the 'intruders', which would be an easier way than offering combat. So, as the unsuspecting and fatigued troops appeared on the fringe of their 'territory', they received them with tribal courtesy, leading them on to the camping site which they had cleared for the night. Our troops were flattered at the warmth of their reception and congratulated themselves at the 'good' impression they were creating in a virgin area untreaded by 'strangers' so far. Leaving a solitary sentry at the entrance of their temporary recess, they soon made themselves comfortable and fell into deep slumber after what had been a trying day. The wily Thagins, led by their chief, first came to our camp that night ostensibly to get some salt and then swooped down on the sleeping Indians,

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who, they thought, had come to conquer their peaceful land, killing 73 out of a total of about 75 soldiers and civilians, in cold blood. Only a few including their Commander, Major Ripudaman Singh, remained at bay for about two days after which they were hounded out and mercilessly hacked to pieces.

The above harrowing tale trickled down through a survivor to Shillong and eventually to Delhi and the question arose in the minds of our Government how to deal with those who had perpetrated this crime. Here we were 'opening up' this territory with the best of intentions and yet the Thagins had brutally put to death so many of our men in one stroke. Some advocated that we should inflict heavy punishment and set an example. Others—like Mahavir Tyagi—suggested indulgence on our part as we were dealing with a primitive people who knew no better and who had to be won over on our side. Any stern measures would have adverse repercussions on the development of NEFA. Nehru suggested that we should be firm but not vindictive and take steps which in no way upset our aims in NEFA. It was eventually decided to send three military 'columns' of about a thousand strong from Daporijo, Along and Machuka, along the river Subansiri to converge at Ashimori and apprehend the criminals. When the Thagin Chief once again saw a force advancing towards his 'kingdom', only this time in much larger numbers, he was truly frightened. He enquired from his deputies, in panic, which power could have sent this lot after he had set a deterrent example and slain the last intruders not so long ago. None of them could, however, educate him on the subject and soon he was encircled and taken captive. Confessing that he had assassinated their earlier party, in the firm belief that he had disposed of the whole of their army, he now lay prostrate and begged their pardon, in utter humility, as he never had any idea that he was in fact getting embroiled with the 'powerful' government

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of his own country. His repentent attitude towards us was reminiscent of a piece from *Mahabharata*: 'He... who fails to cultivate the friendship of the desirable... and bears ill will towards the mighty—he indeed is to be pitied.' Our Government then let him off sagaciously and he became one of our ardent supporters in the Subansiri District.

I had an occasion of discussing the question of border tribes generally, with particular reference to those living in NEFA and Nagaland, with Nehru about this time. He told me we should never treat these people with a superior air nor try to make these simple but sensible folk into a second-rate copy of ourselves. He was not sure whether we had many things to teach them, so far as the philosophy of life was concerned. He was quite clear in his mind that they should be allowed to develop on the lines of their own traditional patterns. We should, however, try and raise a team of their own people as administrators and technicians. But in no field in which we tried to assist should we over-play our part. He ended up by saying that if we forced any step or belief on the tribal people, we would only alienate them from ourselves. This briefing served me well in later years.

Nehru was Chairman of the Territorial Army Advisory Committee and I was its ex-officio Secretary. One of its decisions was to impart military training to a large number of civilians all over the country so that people may learn discipline, develop a feeling of self-reliance and be usefully employed in various national development projects. For this purpose I was to send a team of Army instructors from Punjab to Lahaul and establish a camp at Kyelang which lay across the Rohtang Pass at a height of 11,000 feet. I appointed Captain Trilochan Labh Singh as commander of this team, who was chosen for a temporary Commission a little while ago. When I was briefing him for his mission and wishing him luck, I told him here was a

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chance for him to prove his worth, as he would encounter difficult terrain, inclement weather and inhospitable conditions of living. He seemed a spirited fellow and said he would do his best. I assured him that if he got into any situation which was beyond him, I would personally come to his aid, whatever the odds. He and his team set out on this mission with a stout heart and crossed the treacherous Rohtang Pass without any mishap. They worked hard and created a good impression upon the Lahaulis on arrival. Their training schedule was going according to plan and everything looked lovely in the garden. The weather had behaved itself so far, considering how late it was in the year and the high altitude.

Men of this team retired to bed one night, wondering at the mildness of the barometer. But when they woke up the next morning, they saw to their surprise through the chinks of their tents, flakes of snow falling outside. They found soon after that knee-deep snow lay all around as a result. They extricated their weapons, rations, clothing and themselves with some difficulty, withdrew to a village called Tandi, about six miles West of Kyelang and took shelter in some improvised huts. The Kyelang-Rohtang bridge, over the rivers Chandra and Bhaga, later, collapsed, severing the only link between our men and the rest of India. Their rations began to run low, they had insufficient clothing and many fell ill. One more heavy fall of snow, and they would be stranded for the whole winter as the Rohtang Pass would then be closed for six months!

At this stage Captain T. L. Singh sent me a frantic message portraying his plight. I did not take long to realize that the lives of these men were in peril and that it was my personal responsibility to come to their aid. I had made that categorical promise to them. I, therefore, did not hesitate and obtained permission of Government through proper channels to undertake this task. I asked Lt Col

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B.S. Chand, who had been on my staff till recently, if he would like to join me in this venture. He jumped at the offer.

I was advised by some not to embark upon what they described as a foolhardy trip as not only was the Kulu-Manali road out of action due to recent floods and rains but the Rohtang Pass had become difficult to cross due to several feet of snow. Whatever the odds, it was a point of honour with me now to set out on this mission. Just before leaving, I sent a message to these men that I was coming personally to rescue them wherever they were. Chand and I then left Delhi, with fear in our hearts but determined to have a crack at reaching these men.

Collecting suitable clothing and medical equipment en route, we reached Palampur on the first night. I marshalled a party of selected men to go ahead of us on the road and remove any minor impediments which might be blocking our way. We found that beyond Kulu, the road was full of breaches. We waded through several raging torrents with the aid of ropes tied to tree trunks lest we should be washed away by the speed of the current. As the road had disappeared in several places, we struggled across knee-deep slush and quagmire, going up and down the trackless territory. We reached Kothi via Manali, which lay at the foot of the Rohtang Pass, covering thirty-two miles in hilly terrain in twenty-five hours.

Before we commenced our climb the next morning, we could see the Rohtang Pass under a heavy blanket of snow and shrouded in what seemed a sea of clouds. Our porters warned us that we would have a rough passage if we went up that day.

We encountered steep rock, covered with snow, hardened into slippery ice when we reached about 10,000 feet. Slowly we went up to 11,500 feet from where the final leg of the zig-zag ascent to the Pass began. Rohtang, 13,500 feet, seemed far far away. A gale turned into a

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blizzard, the velocity of which must have been sixty miles an hour or more. It was, in fact, so fierce that many articles of our scanty baggage were blown away from the backs of our porters and went flying into the 'khuds' below. The climbing sticks we were carrying flew out of our hands by the sheer force of this furious wind. We kept going wearily, step by step, till we hit a perpendicular wall of ice which we circumvented at a snail's pace, precariously hanging on to our dear life for all we were worth. It was across this obstruction that we stumbled against the body of a wretched man who lay frozen to death under an ice boulder where he must have halted for rest. Death lurked around every corner and one false step meant a fatal fall, down the treacherous slopes. It was getting unbearably cold and there was no shelter anywhere. We were numb and lifeless and feared we would soon freeze to death like the man whose corpse we had come across a little while ago. The visibility began to deteriorate and dense mist began gathering near the Pass. When we were about 500 feet below it, the strain of fighting a blizzard, specially in heavy snow, began to tell on us. We felt extremely weak and life began oozing out of our limbs. We were now dragging ourselves on and soon were unable to go any further.

In such moments one thinks of many things. I thought of my home, my wife, my children and all the strife I had had to put up in one way or another during my span of life. Chand and I had reached the limit of our endurance but summoning up all our will-power, we kept going in order to save our comrades and ourselves. We were so tired and utterly enervated that every now and again we had to sit down and rest. It required all our courage to keep moving. After what seemed an age, we suddenly found that we were on the top of the Pass. We did not know how we had borne this ordeal and felt greatly relieved that we had got there at long last, leaving behind all the toil of our strenu-

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ous ascent. The surrounding mountains rose up to over 20,000 feet and the temperature was sub-normal. The Pass presented a majestic, though frightening, picture, especially at night. Panting for breath, we collapsed in thick snow, dead-beat and with chances of our survival remote.

Howling wind blew furiously all that night and our troubled minds began wandering in the darkness. We thought we saw visions of the great Sage Vyas who had done penance here about two thousand years ago during which he wrote the great epic of the *Mahabharata*. We also knew that the River Beas, named after Sage Vyas had emerged from where we stood. We were in stirring surroundings.

We badly missed a hot drink and warm clothes and just when we were looking for our porters, who had gone out of our sight earlier, some of them turned up, out of the blue. They carried tea and sugar and some blankets. We at once melted snow to make some tea. This was the one thing which could save our lives. Since water takes long to boil at high altitudes and in arctic temperatures, we kept fiddling with the preparation of this God-sent source of sustenance. We brewed our beverage in two empty tins which we had scrounged and when it was ready, we thought we had produced nectar and ambrosia rolled into one. As we had only two tins, the question therfore arose in my mind as to who should have the first of these two little tins of tea: the porters, who were also down and out like us, or Chand and I. All four of us were dying to have a hot drink. I argued that if in this crisis, we could let the porters have the first instalment of our tea, they would become a part of us for ever. And so they enjoyed our hospitality and we waited for our turn. It seemed years before the next round of tea was ready.

As we had left Delhi in great hurry, we brought with us neither sufficient warm apparel nor any snow ointment. Due to undue exposure, therefore, our faces were bleeding, the skin having come apart, and our feet had got swollen. As if we had not had enough, we ran into a snow bear that

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night. The beast stood aghast, perhaps on seeing strangers intruding into his privacy but after staring at us menacingly for a while, it turned away into space, leaving us alone.

Time crawled on painfully but at long last dawn came and with it bright sunshine and the end of foul weather. A ray of hope, which one sees in the grimmest of situations, now seemed around the corner. Sure enough, when we were getting ready for the last phase of our journey, we saw one of our men emerging from the other side of this Pass followed closely by the rest of the men whom we had come to rescue. They had crossed the frozen river somehow and had made their way up to here. These ill-clad, physically broken and half starved men, many of them snow blind and with blistered, bleeding or frost-bitten feet, were visibly moved to see us as they knew we had hazarded this trek only for their sake. Some touching scenes took place when we met and many of us broke down in mutual greeting.

Once these men had collected in a group, I organized them into several parties. They were forty in all, many being unfit due to various ailments. I therefore put one fit man in charge of small groups of the ailing so that they could help the sick men down the slopes of Rohtang.

When we reached the foot of this Pass by dusk, after an adventurous and exhausting day, we discovered that two of our men were missing and no one knew where they were. After ransacking every nook and corner, I decided that we could not return home without locating these men and some of us must go all the way up the Pass in their search. This was a paralyzing thought as we had the will to do it but not the strength to move another inch. The fact remained, however, that so far as I was concerned, these two men could not be left in the lurch. Just before I organized a search for these men that night, however, we saw them staggering back in our camp. We thanked the Lord for His mercies and slept like logs that night. It was smooth sailing from here to Manali and thence to Delhi.

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When I returned to Delhi—in a battered state—I was widely congratulated by friends on my recent escapade. The Minister for Defence sent me a written commendation. Nehru asked me over for a meal. The press in India splashed the news of this adventure in headlines. The foreign press asked me for special articles. Jealousies were aroused in the Army and elsewhere, at the same time.

I was promoted to the rank of Major General on 15 January 1956 and posted as U.P. Area Commander for a few months (after which I was appointed Commander Fourth Infantry Division). I had many training establishments under me including a Para Brigade commanded by Brigadier P. P. Kumaramangalam, the Present Army Chief.

I had been invited to visit the district jail in Bareilly. Whilst going around the establishment, I saw a young visitor bidding a tearful good-bye to an oldish prisoner who, I understood, was to be hanged the next day. When I stopped near him, out of curiosity, and asked the Superintendent of the jail the background of this scene, he told me that the older man had confessed to the authorities that he had committed a murder which was in fact his son's doing and had been accordingly condemned to death. The son had now come to jail to see his unfortunate father who, in trying to save the former, was to die in a few hours' time. The injustice and the prospect of an innocent man losing his life was something I could not accept. I therefore at once rang up my cousin, M. G. Kaul, I.C.S., who was Home Secretary at Lucknow. I implored him to issue a stay order preventing the man in question from being hanged the next day. Kaul rose to the occasion, acted fast and, without any fuss, issued the necessary orders. The condemned man was saved from the gallows, giving me a chance to make a last-minute appeal to the Home Minister, Pandit Pant, in an attempt to save his life. But alas, the old man stuck to his confession and the authorities had no option but to hang

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him after some weeks, much to my dismay.

Lt Gen Sant Singh was my Army Commander. He told me in the summer of 1956 that in an unfortunate incident recently near Kohima, soldiers of the 2 Sikh had accidentally killed a prominent Naga citizen and loyal supporter of our Government, seventy five year old Doctor Haralu. Since Kohima had been attacked by the Nagas, not long ago, the Indian Army felt embittered about this stab in the back and were more vigilant than ever before. One morning a patrol of 2 Sikh spotted from a distance the dim outline of Doctor Haralu, as he was out on a morning stroll, staggering shakily in his native garb towards Kohima. Mistaking him for a hostile, they promptly shot him dead. There was naturally a great hue and cry when the dead man was identified as Doctor Haralu. The Indian Army was accused of brutality and India of treachery. Dr Haralu's daughter was serving on Nehru's staff in the External Affairs Ministry in Delhi. This news reached her and Nehru about the same time. An enquiry was set up at once to investigate this affair. Fearing strong political repercussions, the Military Commanders including Lt Col Gurbaksh Singh, commanding the battalion concerned, were anxious to protect their men who had killed Haralu by mistake. As a result of the first investigation the accused remained unpunished. As this enquiry was held to be prejudiced, another enquiry was ordered which was carried out by the Judge Advocate General, Brigadier D. M. Sen, who found the accused guilty and who were given a stiff sentence. Unfounded insinuations were made by some against certain commanders in connection with this crime. Lt Gen Sant Singh was retired five months prematurely despite faithful and conscientious service and replaced by Thimayya[48]. The brigade and battalion com-

48 The story goes that when Thimayya tried to see the Naga hostile Chief, Kaito, the latter refused to meet him on grounds of protocol as he said Thimayya was only an Army Commander (and hence not entitled to see the Naga Chief).

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manders were transferred under a cloud and became victims of circumstances.

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Four

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The Preparation

I have done the state some service, and they know't.

SHAKESPEARE

I WAS appointed Commander of 4 (Red Eagle) Infantry Division in the Punjab in the summer of 1956. This formation had won world-wide fame in the last war. My predecessor, Maj Gen Bahadur Singh had left me a well-geared formation. I had under me three Infantry Brigades, five, seven and eleven, apart from the usual supporting arms. They had, in them, some excellent troops. I had asked the authorities to post to me the 2nd Sikhs when they were moved out of Nagaland so that I could restore their reputation which had inadvertently received a set-back in the Haralu case not long ago. I dished out many bouquets when this battalion came under my command and boosted their morale. They soon proved that they were second to none in sports, drill, shooting or training.

My Corps Commander was first Lt Gen Thorat and later Lt Gen J. N. Chaudhuri. I enjoyed working with the former but found the latter egoistic with a gift of the gab and over-anxious to keep on the right side of his superiors.

One of the first things I did on assuming command of this Division was to write to Maj Gen T. W. Rees who had once commanded this formation and on whom I doted. He was

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now leading a retired life in Britain and was, in his spare time, building a township called Cwmbran [situated about five miles north of Newport (Monmouthshire in Wales) and about eighteen miles near Cardiff in Glamorgan]. I wrote to him that I had the honour of being selected for the command of the renowned 4 Division—an assignment I had assumed in a spirit of humility and pride and with the consciousness that it was a formation which once had no less a person than him at its helm. I said in my letter I hoped he would keep guiding me as he had done some years ago. I got back a warm reply to say that he was deeply touched to receive my letter and that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to keep in touch with this division and with my doings. (I kept giving him divisional news periodically which he was delighted to get till one day I heard a few years later that he was dead. In his death, I lost a precious friend and a great superior.)

Four tasks confronted me in my new command: train my division for its operational role by doing as many exercises as I could and learn various techniques of war; attain proficiency in shooting weapons at all levels; excel in sports and attend to administration including accommodation for troops and their families. All these were important factors in raising the morale of officers and men which is conducive to high fighting calibre.

Commanding a division consisting of nearly 20,000 men, or for that matter, any large group, is a complicated affair. In order to manage so many men and matters, you have to understand them and their background thoroughly and deal with them with skill. A Major General's rank and authority alone does not fill the bill. You are bound to come across many kinds of situations in this process, including disloyalty, ingratitude, flattery, cowardice, meanness, falsehood and other frailties[1] of human character which you must take in your stride. Your consolation, however, is

1 A situation so true to life generally.

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that if you come across these unpleasant experiences, you also meet with shining examples of sacrifice, courage and comradeship. I therefore prepared myself to deal with this mixed bag.

Before I got down to the military aspects of training this division, I refreshed my mind on what I had read or was ever taught about man-management and leadership. I studied the employment in battle of all arms and services from a divisional point of view. I then carried out progressive exercises on the ground, practising various operations of war.

Two major exercises—amongst many others that I did—were held by Western Command in which I took part along with my division: 'Malwa' and 'Doaba'. Large scale movements and deployment of infantry troops, use of armour, artillery, engineers and signals took place. Major tactical situations cropped up and were tackled. In one of these exercises, I had to negotiate the river Sutlej. As I was short of assault equipment, I decided to cross with only one brigade up. I had to rehearse with artillery and engineer support, placed at my disposal. When the 'H' hour was thirty-six hours ahead, I was going over all the actions I had to take during this operation with my 'O' group. I had just started this conference, when Lt Gen J. N. Chaudhuri rolled up in a jeep and said—within the hearing of my Brigade Commanders and others—that as General K.S. Thimayya, the Army Chief, thought this assault crossing should be carried out with two Brigades up, I must change my plans accordingly. I told him that I was limited in this action by the paucity of assault equipment and hence, despite what the Chief said, it was impracticable for me to change my orders at the last minute. Also, there was not enough time left to alter and rehearse my fire-plans. When Chaudhuri kept nervously pressing the plea that he did not want to get on the wrong side of the Chief on this exercise

2 The key Commanders who have to execute an operation.

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on this account, I asked if we were training for war or pleasing our superiors. Chaudhuri purred, within the hearing of most of my 'O' group that I could say what I liked but must (for heaven's sake) employ two brigades in the assault. There was a bridge on the Grand Trunk Road which was supposed to have been 'destroyed' for purposes of this exercise. Since Chaudhuri would not see any sense, I reluctantly gave orders that we would treat it as if it was intact and instead of going over the river in boats which we did not have, a brigade should sit in trucks which should represent boats (!) and get across the 'destroyed' bridge. When General Thimayya saw Brigadier Bhagwati Singh with 11 Brigade crossing the river in lorries over the 'destroyed' bridge, which one was *not* supposed to cross, for purposes of this exercise, he naturally took him to task and was surprised why Chaudhuri had not considered the practical difficulties and had asked us to indulge in this farcical crossing.

The above was a typical example of how Chaudhuri tried to please his bosses. It was a sight to see him in the presence of his immediate superior, Lt Gen Kalwant Singh. He also spent much time in relating, specially to his subordinates, tales of his 'exploits'. So far as I was concerned—and I know of many others who share this view—I thought he was over-anxious to create an impression in the right quarters, sometimes at the expense of his subordinates. He was yearning to know what others were thinking of him and often kept asking what they thought of him or some of his actions, hoping to get a reply that he was a hell of a guy!

General Thimayya sent a Chinese military delegation led by Marshal Yeh Chiang-Ying to visit my division in February 1958. I was told to stage a live fire-power demonstration on this occasion and was naturally anxious to give as good an account of my country and my army to this delegation as possible. After much effort, I organized a combined Army and Air Force exercise named 'Dhanush'

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and showed an attack by an Infantry Battalion as part of a phased brigade assault supported by tanks, divisional artillery, medium machine-guns, mortars and Air. It was intended to bring out the softening up of the enemy position before an attack, the importance of co-ordination with Air and Armour and the use of all available fire support on known enemy localities likely to interfere with Infantry assaulting across open ground by day. The pre-'H' hour bombardment by air and artillery was shown first. Then came the Infantry on the Forming Up Place and crossing the start line, moving on to the objective under cover of artillery fire, assisted by tanks. At the same time, mortars and medium machine guns took on the enemy positions on the flanks which might have interfered with the move forward.

Among those present during this demonstration were Defence Minister Krishna Menon, Army Chief Thimayya, Air Chief Mukerjee, and Students of the Staff College, including their Commandant, Maj Gen Gyani.

In welcoming the guests at a dinner, I mugged up and delivered a short speech in Chinese, much to everyone's amusement. The cordiality which prevailed then between us and the Chinese was based on our Government's policy at the time.

I had certain operational responsibilities along the Indo-Pakistan border and, therefore, carried out several ground reconnaissances of important places between Ferozepore and Pathankot via Wagah and Dera Baba Nanak bridge. I studied the terrain adjacent to these areas, with special reference to communications and obstacles.

My Division was selected by Thimayya to give a demonstration of attack to Marshal Zhukov. We were ready but his visit was cancelled at the last minute. Later, I attended a sand-model exercise in Headquarters Western Command, Simla, during which we were confronted with many practical problems. When Chaudhuri, one of the parti-

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cipants in this exercise, was confronted with a problem, presented to him by Lt Gen Kalwant Singh, he demonstrated a frame of mind, in the presence of more than one senior officer, which, to say the least, was not inspiring, considering his so-called reputation and experience.

I was staying with Chaudhuri at Jullundur in 1958 when he told me he wanted his fortune read by a celebrated *Bhrigu* (an astrologer of sorts) at Hoshiarpur, about an hour's run from Jullundur and whether I could come with him. Accompanied by another officer, we went to this pundit who told Chaudhuri to his great delight that he would rise to be the Army Chief one day. He correctly forecast some events in my life also.

Prem Bhatia, a journalist of repute, was editor of the *Tribune,* an English daily in Ambala. He and I were at College together. He invited me in April 1959 to a function where Ellsworth Bunker, the American Ambassador, was being entertained. I sat, off my guard, taking a remote interest in the proceedings when he suddenly announced that I should say a few words in honour of the distinguished guest. This took me by surprise and I managed to blurt out a few friendly sentiments apart from having an interesting talk with him later. When he returned to Delhi, he sent me the following letter:

New Delhi
21 April 1959

Dear General Kaul:

. . . I do not know when I have enjoyed a meeting or a conversation more. It is not often that such a feeling of sympathy and identity of views is aroused at a first meeting as I feel had developed in our conversation that night. . .

Yours very sincerely,

Ellsworth Bunker.

(At this very time, ironically, I was being described as anti-American by my detractors.)

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Major Rangabhashyam was on my staff. He was a highly competent officer. Apart from work, we used to discuss many other matters. He had intelligent views and asked me once what I thought of the cultures of various States in India. I confessed that I liked South Indian and Bengali ways of life. These two communities led an unsophisticated existence, eating *idli, dosa* or fish, wore their traditional dress, at least at home, and spoke Tamil, Telugu, or Bengali —as the case may be—without any complexes. They enjoyed their own brand of music, celebrated their festivals, and generally retained their identities, unlike some in India who thought that being an Indian was a stigma.

The South Indians in Ambala asked me about this time to preside over the *aradhana* music festival of Sri Thyagaraja. I knew little about this saint-musician and in order not to cut a sorry figure on this occasion, I studied his life in some detail. I found that his well-chosen words lent themselves to elaboration of *sangatis,* his speciality. Thyagaraja was a master of vivid literary expression, giving prominence to feeling and emotion, who never repeated himself. He was a literary musician *par excellence.*

I once got a letter (which I still possess) from an Anglo-Indian lady Mrs. Joyce Nagle,[3] in her twenties, who lay dying in a local hospital, which read as follows:

Dear General,

On a matter of great urgency, which means life and death to me, I beg of you to come and see me for ten minutes at your earliest.

God bless and bring you,

Yours sincerely,

Joyce Nagle

I rushed to the hospital and found her gasping for breath. She asked me to sit near her and whispered, when she was alone, that she was aware that I had been a victim of loose

3 Wife of Captain Nagle, then in 6/8 Gorkha Rifles serving under me.

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talk in certain circles and that she disbelieved all she heard against me. She added she wanted me to know of this belief. She then put her little hand into mine and cried. A little later, she was no more. This incident moved me beyond words.

Menon paid a surprise visit to my Division in March 1958. I had met him only once before in Nehru's residence about ten years earlier. But this was the first time I was really meeting him on my own ground. He was brusque in manner and seemed to be in a great hurry. I first discussed with him our operational role and how we had trained ourselves in it during the last two years or so and then brought to his notice some points of administration. I told him that as he perhaps knew, as a result of the partition of our country a few years ago, although only one-third of the armed forces went to Pakistan, as much as two-thirds of their accommodation happened to be located in that area. We were therefore faced with an acute shortage of family accommodation in particular which was far below our entitlement. My predecessors had represented this matter to higher authorities without any results. Government were perhaps unable to do anything, as, among other things, they had not decided the location of the armed forces finally. But the troops' morale began to suffer without adequate family accommodation.

Menon told me that at the present rate, with procedural and other departmental hurdles, it would take nearly thirty years to solve this problem (through the normal building channels) and no one could wait that long. He therefore asked if he allotted the requisite funds, whether the troops would be prepared to build their accommodation for their own families. At first I did not take him seriously. His predecessors also had many similar discussions on the subject. But Menon appeared to mean business. I therefore pondered over this idea for a while. This matter needed a

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reference to my military superiors. I told him that if the latter had no objection,[4] and if there was no other way of solving it, I would agree. I told him that I did not think that it was beneath the dignity of troops to undertake this task, specially when it was for themselves and their own families. I also did not believe that by working in a project of this sort, temporarily, for a few months, my troops would forget or get rusty in their life-long profession. Nor did I think that their interrupted military training would affect their soldiering irreparably, spècially when they could brush it up soon after.

Menon asked me how much money I required for this project and how long would I take to build it. I quickly worked on an ad hoc formula, weighing up various items in my head, such as delays by contractors and other factors which raised costs, as also that work would proceed on a faster pace under stricter and more disciplined army control. I therefore told him I would be prepared to do this job in about six to seven months and at a cost of about rupees one crore. This was a quicker and cheaper estimate than the normal building agencies could give him. I was able to say this because I had implicit faith in the versatility of all ranks under my command, a combination of their virtues, i.e., courage, hard work, and honesty of purpose, with which they could accomplish any task allotted to them. Moreover, I had the confidence that I could toil in any endeavour with them. At this point, he asked me to fly back to Delhi with him that night so that he could work out further details with me about this project. I told him, however, that I was unable to leave the station without the approval of my immediate military superiors. Menon took this as a lame excuse and left almost in a huff. The next morning I received orders from General Thimayya and my other

4 Lt Gen J. N. Chaudhuri, Lt Gen Kalwant Singh and General K. S. Thimayya, who were my military superiors, gave me permission to undertake this project.

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superiors to see him in Delhi forthwith which I did. He confirmed what he had discussed with me in Ambala the day before and said I would be given special powers to skip many procedures during this project. Thimayya, an excellent Army Chief, told me that his initial reactions to this scheme were not favourable. On second thought, however when he took into account that continued shortage of accommodation was adversely affecting the morale of his troops, he had agreed.

My aim was to build 1450 houses for all ranks complete with allied services and furniture costing just over one crore of rupees in about seven months. This worked out mathematically to three and a half hours per house. I first assembled all my commanders and told them I had undertaken this gigantic task on their behalf. They pledged to give me their full support.

At this stage, we took part in an operational exercise called 'Doaba'—which I have mentioned earlier—and which was set by higher authorities to test our fitness for war and from which we came back in triumph. The summer was now at its worst and the working conditions under the scorching sun and in blinding dust storms extremely exacting.

Menon laid the foundation-stone of this Project which was eventually launched on 16 June 1958. Its Chief Engineer was Colonel Shamsher Singh, a courteous, conscientious and capable officer with a delightful disposition. Lt Col Lamba was in charge of the administration and proved to be invaluable.

Apart from the 1450 houses, we had to lay on an extra water supply of about 600,000 gallons and sixteen miles of its mains; augment electricity by procuring 450 KW from the Bhakra grid system, as also to develop eight miles of internal road. The project would require 20,000 tons of stores, costing over Rs. 6,000,000 including four crores of bricks, 10,000 tons of cement, 8000 tons of coal and 1500

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tons of steel. Many of them were in short supply due to restrictions on import and their procurement extremely difficult. Provisioning of the stores had to be done without delay and specifications and designs had to be worked out in detail. No one was certain how the man-power situation would emerge where soldiers and civilian artisans would work together.

There were fourteen brick kilns in the vicinity with a capacity of one crore (ten million) bricks per season. But on hearing of our needs, their owners went underground and when I approached them, they said they had hardly anything except half-burnt bricks to give. This was not playing ball and so I took over these kilns with the assistance of the local Commissioner and extracted from them whatever I could on payment. I was not doing this for the benefit of my health and so my conscience did not prick. I had to import three crore (thirty million) of bricks from other localities. Sand was available on the banks of the river Ghaggar, nearby. I brought to the sites of construction whatever quantities were needed. I thought the sand on river banks was a free commodity but discovered to my surprise that it was Government property for which we had to pay. During monsoons, when it was washed away due to rains, it became an acute problem. Some timber and other stores came from adjoining areas but my demands far exceeded what was available and so I had to seek the balance far away.

Maximum use was made of civil hired transport in order to keep our own free for operational tasks. As far as covered accommodation was concerned, we doubled up as much as possible so that we could locate a variety of workshops and meet other requirements of this nature.

Then came the monsoon. The rains interfered with our laying foundations to a certain extent. The brick kilns stopped functioning. I ran into much red-tape in several fields. For instance, I found there was a ban on removing

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bricks from U.P. to Punjab. I had several meetings with Ministers of the U.P. Government and the Central Cabinet and had this ban waived. The matter of transportation was a knotty affair. The Railway Board eventually came to my rescue, giving me the required number of wagons. Special goods trains were run under the ingenious guidance of a spirited official, named Shiv Kishore. When I pressed him to accelerate the flow of these wagons, he gave a wink to his railway staff at times to let goods trains carrying our stores get priority of movement over fast trains, including mails and expresses. I sought assistance of the employment exchanges to meet my ever increasing demands of man-power. As work progressed, a healthy impact on morale of troops became visible, when they saw their own achievement with pride. We required 20,000 pieces of doors, windows and ventilators. These were available at the joinery mills of the Jammu and Kashmir Government at Srinagar and Delhi. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed gave me bold assistance in buying these articles. The speedy transportation of these items and the window-panes presented a problem at first which was solved in the end. My requirement of furniture was for over 10,000 pieces.

The question of roofing was an intricate affair. Some methods of its manufacture were too expensive and others too difficult. I then heard of a new type of roof which had been developed at the Central Building Research Institute at Roorkee, consisting of pre-cast doubly-curved shells which were placed on RCC planks and cast in situ on to beams. This type of construction was economical in cement and steel and could be insulated with mud *phuska* and tiles to suit our conditions. The design had been tested extensively, was unconventional and provided the answer to our problem; 30,000 of these were cast by my engineers. (Though I was not an engineer, I was determined to understand various engineering technicalities.)

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Winter was now upon us and our efforts had reached the saturation point. The soldier was quick to learn what he was doing. I provided music, free cold drinks and tea during the hours of work. I established a tented office at each construction site for close supervision and to be available to those who sought to see me.

Whilst I had Project 'Amar'—as this undertaking was known—still at my hands, I was also given by Menon a Herculean task of building the Defence Pavilion, at which defence equipment had to be exhibited, at the India Exhibition in Delhi within six weeks for which the engineers required a much longer period.[5] I used Jet and other aircraft to take me from Ambala to Delhi and back so that I could be present on both the sites each day without losing much time. The jet took fifteen minutes to perform the one way trip. The job consisted of a plinth of 15,000 square feet and a height of 35 feet. As the cost of construction was going up due to heavy rains and rising prices, I asked our Financial Adviser, who was a friend of mine, to personally have a look at the site which he did, to see for himself our numerous difficulties.

I launched this project called 'Vijay' on 19 August 1958. My Chief Engineer here was the reliable Colonel B. N. Das. The man who carried out the construction was Lala Tirath Ram, an experienced hand at this game.

Six weeks were given to me to do this job for which experts wanted nearly six months. Planning and execution was therefore done side by side. No working drawings were available. The army architect had major differences of opinion with the engineers and hence was replaced by Rana, an authority with an international

5 In fact, Thimayya wrote to the Engineer-in-Chief, Army Headquarters, on 18 August 1958, that as the latter had said it was physically impossible for him to complete task (within six weeks) and as I had accepted this responsibility, I had been put in its charge. He said he had promised to give me all the necessary help and support to complete the project in time.

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reputation. The sub-soil water level in this area was only four feet below the surface of the ground. It also had a network of underground electrical cables and water mains. This forced us to redesign the foundation and shift the building layout, which meant delay. The new architect made radical changes in our layout and designs. The monsoon was at its height. The sub-soil level rose further. Steel and cement were moved speedily from near Bengal to Delhi. Bricks, stone aggregate and sand was poured in the construction work with speed. We worked round the clock. There were times when I stood supervising construction till the small hours of the morning in pouring rain, returning to Ambala and face the many conundrums of 'Amar' the next day. This was gruelling work. Menon asked for more buildings to go up in this project as the work progressed and its scope therefore increased. In addition to the Defence Pavilion, I had to build a modern theatre and a restaurant. The plinth area now became 28000 square feet, almost double its original size.

I had read a book recently in which it was stated that loads could be erected on fresh cement, without strict stipulation of time, so long as this was done steadily. Experts held, however, that loads should be put after giving cement three weeks to set. I did not see why there should be any sanctity about the total time that cement should take to set, so long as loads were put steadily and not at once. Girders of sixty-five feet span were completed within a week. Reinforced concrete raft foundations were provided for the entire construction. Tresses were welded under great stress and N girders were fabricated. Many transformers went out of order due to monsoon, and the welding of purlins and rafters became a headache. But the whole project was completed on time and was inaugurated by Nehru.

I once again began to concentrate on Project 'Amar'.

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Steel and cement were procured in requisite quantities and in time. I sent picked officers all over India to accelerate the supply of stores by personal liaison. Firms raised prices at the last minute and many contracts failed but I made emergency arrangements. Lt Col D. S. Rao proved to be a tower of strength to me in this endeavour.

Work on allied services such as roads, drainage, electricity and water supply commenced as the winter began. Sinking of tube wells proved a problem but eventually we managed to have an average yield of 15000 gallons per hour as against an anticipated yield of 10000 gallons. The Punjab Government were reluctant to give extra power till 1961 but after some effort I persuaded them to give us what we required. The additional load needed strengthening of the mains, distribution system and more sub-stations. Electrical goods were in short supply and no one could guarantee that they would come in time. Certain parts of switch-gear equipment had to be imported from abroad and, therefore, provision had to be made for foreign exchange, a difficult business at the best of times. All this was done through personal contact to cut out red tape and avoid delays.

I was providing water-borne sanitation in this project. The system which existed in the station was based on septic tanks and soakage wells which usually became ineffective after a year or two. The local soil between the depths of six and thirty feet had a high percentage of clay. Sub-soil was found at about thirty feet. These conditions did not allow permanent disposal into the strata. The system was, therefore, considered unsuitable and another evolved ultimately, based on construction of collection of wells from where sewage was pumped into septic tanks in outlying areas close to natural nullas which could take the effluent.

Sanitary ware and sewage stores were in short supply. Import restrictions on them resulted in an acute shortage

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as the demand could not be met by indigenous production.

There was a tendency on the part of civilian labour —some of whom had been employed to supplement our effort—to arrive late on work which wasted time. Trade unions tried to incite them but in vain, as they were well looked after by us. The month of December gave me anxious moments as stores were arriving late and many contracts were failing to materialize. In respect of ironmongery, I had to send parties simultaneously to at least six different places with cash to purchase this item locally. One of the contracts which failed was in respect of window panes. I was let down at the eleventh hour in case of roof tanks for storage of water. By the end of the month, all stores had come after many baffling moments and by 10 January 1959, we had completed our task. At the last minute, it was decided to fabricate a sixty feet high steel arch at the stadium where the opening ceremony was to be held. This was by itself a major task. At last we had reached the end of our journey. My engineers and other troops and their commanders had registered a significant triumph by sweat and blood. It had been a pilot project which had succeeded in adverse conditions of time and weather and because it was executed by unorthodox methods employing virgin agencies. It had been the combination of leadership at all levels, team work, sense of urgency and purpose, spirit of comradeship and personal factors which can come only rarely in a life-time.

On 16 January, Nehru accompanied by Menon, several Cabinet Ministers, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, the three Service Chiefs and many other dignitaries arrived by air and went round the whole project. Later, before an audience of about 20,000 troops, their families and about 10,000 others, Nehru inaugurated 'Amar'.

I had taught my 20,000 men to sing in chorus a spirited

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song in Hindi,[6] written by Jemadar Kashmiri, which created a sense of unity, purpose and a wave of patriotic fervour in the whole division and strengthened their bonds of comradeship. When Nehru heard this stirring song, he was thrilled. Thimayya had conveyed to me his appreciation in writing earlier. Congratulating all ranks who had accomplished this task, Nehru said they had set up a fine example of self-help for which they deserved praise from all their countrymen. He added they had assembled not to celebrate a victory in war but a victory of another kind. He was impressed by the speed and efficiency with which the troops of the Fourth Infantry Division had worked. It was an outstanding example of their patriotism and what disciplined people could achieve. I rounded off the inauguration ceremony by laying on an open-air lunch for nearly 20,000 men. Nehru was delighted having a meal with soldiers who had done a good job and mingled with them freely. This lunch was laid, eaten and covers removed, all within twenty minutes. This impressed the Prime Minister greatly.

There has been much comment in this country and in our army on the question of whether our troops should be employed on building houses for themselves. Normally, I am opposed to their doing so, as it interferes with their military duties. They are meant to train for war in the defence of their country. But under special circumstances, I think there is no harm in their undertaking such tasks, e.g. build accommodation for their families, combat floods, etc. Most countries employ their troops in various

6 Translated in English, it read as follows:-
Indians! and those of four Div!
Let us do well by our country
We will goad our spirits and bring credit to India
We are sons of India and will hum 'Victory to India'
Serving and defending our country is our mission
The blood in our veins itches for sacrifice
We will bestow all we have including our life upon our country
Indians. . . .

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non-military activities, when they find that except by employing them, there is no other way of solving a particular problem and in time. For instance, troops are called upon to repair damaged civil bridges, to combat floods, to help in the rescue work after rail accidents, and in the wake of earthquakes all tasks which interfere in their military duties as training for war. I can also cite instances from U.S.A., Europe, including the U.S.S.R. and the U.K. where troops have been employed to help the civil authority in many ways, including combing out criminals. If Commanders in our army had been opposed to accepting non-military tasks, as some of them say they were, I do not know why many of them undertook them when asked to do so instead of putting their foot down and refusing to accept such assignments.

It is important to feed and clothe our men well, and provide them with good weapons and equipment with which they can fight. They should also be provided with accommodation for themselves and for their wives and children. Only then can they remain contented. If they are separated from their families during the course of their duties or in war, they can understand. What they cannot understand is this : why they are not provided with quarters for themselves (their wives and children) in a family station, where they come after prolonged periods of enforced separation. Their morale then begins to be affected adversely, something which commanders must preserve at all times. Anything which causes this set-back should be nipped in the bud. If Government or the army are unable to solve this problem, the commanders concerned and their troops should do it themselves. If troops remain short of family accommodation, despite representations to high authority, it is no use burying our heads like an ostrich and keep harping on the thread-bare maxim : 'Troops are not meant to build.' Of what use are sermons on this subject which have only an academic value?

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In order to restore their morale, in this respect, which is bound to affect their war-worthiness in the end, their commanders are fully justified to ask them to build shelter for their own families. This should give them satisfaction of helping themselves and an opportunity of living with their wives and children for a while. But considerable hue and cry has been heard in the public and within the army on this topic. Few have pondered over this question in its correct perspective.

My soldiers and their families lacked housing. Government knew our deficiency in this respect but could not come to our aid over the last many years due to apathy, shortage of money and because the final location of troops had not been decided. This was affecting the morale of my men. Was I to do nothing? Instead of only preaching, I practised. Many other military commanders were in a similar situation but did little about it, till I began this project. I built—with the concurrence of my military superiors—for only seven out of a total of thirty-four months of my command in the Fourth Infantry Division. People said this interruption in my troops' training had adversely affected their military efficiency on an unprofessional task. But, then, there are other interruptions, such as employment of troops and their equipment on many civilian tasks, leave and sickness, also affecting the troops' training, though only temporarily, which can always be brushed up as I did immediately after this project.

Whereas I had been criticized when I built my troops' family accommodation with their self-help, no one took exception when men of the Indian Army and their valuable equipment were used, year after year, in many civilian tasks, like the *Kumbh Mela, which were of no military advantage.* In fact, we pointed out repeatedly to successive Defence Ministers since partition that whereas we would gladly help the civil administration in emergencies, but as this was an ever recurring demand, Government

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should make for it a separate provision from some other source and thus protect rather than consume frequently our essential, depleted and part-worn equipment. Each Defence Minister, however, expressed his helplessness to resist this demand 'from the people'. Whenever this case went up to the Prime Minister, it came back with more or less a similar reaction, though worded differently.

We had solved our own problem, through 'Amar', which no one else was prepared to do. In the process, we had worked as a dedicated team with a unity of purpose.

They went on harping on the word *builder* about me derisively, a la Goebels, as if I had done nothing else in life, till many people believed it. (Out of over twenty-six years of total service and nearly three years of commanding this Division then, I had *built* for only seven months here and a few months elsewhere.)

In order to make up for the time I had lost, I carried out considerable training during the period February-May 1959. All units did their field firing and carried out various operations of war. A high standard of drill was achieved in the Divisional drill competition which was held in April. We won both the corps and command shooting championships. Apart from a major exercise, several *tewts* were run and demonstrations on tank hunting, mine-laying and breaching as also on camouflage and concealment were held. The Division was fighting fit once again.

I found that whenever Nehru patted me on the back in public, it invariably led to some wagging of tongues. Accordingly, as soon as 'Amar' received his approbation, a whispering campaign began to point out many technical flaws in the buildings I had erected, that this project had had a demoralizing effect on my troops and that my Division had ceased to be an effective force. This was a travesty of facts. In fact, the structures were sound and my troops were proud of having built their own family

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accommodation, losing none of their professional prowess in the process. My men could hardly forget what they had learnt for years in a few months!

During this project, when many prophets had predicted our failure, we faced a great challenge. We had broken many conventions and hence had trod on the toes of some engineers and contractors whose pet theories we had disproved.

Thimayya visited 'Amar' twice before it was completed. Writing to me about this project he said he wished to convey 'his pleasure and congratulations to all officers, N.C.Os and jawans who had achieved these results under my inspiring and dominating leadership'. A few months later, he wrote to me that he would ensure I remained in my present assignment till the end of May 1959 to enable me to train my Division up to the required level. He added he was quite sure all the talking and jealousies regarding project 'Amar' would cease once it had been completed and people really saw my achievement. He told me not to bother too much about what people were saying.

Nehru said at a public meeting soon after the opening ceremony of our project that the trait of the Indian soldier which left an indelible mark on his mind was the efficiency and speed with which nearly 20,000 people who witnessed the ceremony were served hot meals within twenty minutes without any stampede and confusion. He said this was an example in discipline which the whole of India should emulate.

The *Statesman*, a prominent English daily of Calcutta, said on 18 January 1959, that the achievement of 4 Infantry Division fully justified the encomia of Nehru when he visited the new colony on 16 Jan 1959. By normal methods, this project would have taken two to three years (to build)...and cost twice as much. Similar projects, it was stated, were to be launched within the next few

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months in some key centres and their progress would be watched with interest, not by the forces only. The Army estimated to reach the required scale of accommodation...in at least thirty years. For the nation's defenders, said the *Statesman*, that obviously was not good enough.

Lt Gen J. N. Chaudhuri wrote to me that in years to come, people would draw the wrong lesson from 'Amar' in that they would say that it showed what the troops were capable of. The correct lesson to draw, he added, was that we found a Divisional Commander who had the courage to take on this task. A little later, he wrote to me that the adventure of India was always in front of us and that it was people like me who would continue to play many parts in these exciting times.

In May 1959, I got orders of promotion to the rank of Lt Gen and was appointed Quartermaster General at the Army Headquarters. I had commanded 4 Infantry Division for nearly three years and 11 Infantry Brigade for over three and half years, (apart from commanding other Infantry sub-Units earlier). Yet it was alleged by some that I lacked experience of command.

Chaudhuri wrote to me that the announcement of my promotion to Quartermaster General was the most fitting news he could receive. He added it was a very just award for everything I had done and he was sure with my energy and drive he would see great strides made on the administration as well as on the tactical side of the army. He ended up by describing himself as one of my staunchest supporters!

I came to Army Headquarters as Quartermaster General in June 1959 and lived at 5, York Road in a large bungalow with a sprawling garden. This was my first confrontation with the mighty Government and the Military Mecca, as a senior officer. I found these set-ups a sea of red-tape,

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instead of being the fountain-heads of policy. They consisted of various water-tight compartments and were complex and heartless organizations, working without much enthusiasm and mutual co-ordination. In fact, most of their officials hesitated in taking bold decisions. They—with a few exceptions—functioned without a human touch and more like machines.

I took over from Lt Gen Daulet Singh, a brilliant staff officer, and had a competent team of officers under me. Maj Gen R.N. Nehra was my trustworthy deputy.

My principal tasks were 'Q' planning, construction of army accommodation, movement of personnel, equipment and stores, and provision of supplies and transport. I was anxious that adequate construction should be carried out speedily and economically and movement should be well-planned and quick. By unconventional methods, I began effecting improvements in these fields and received much support from Krishna Menon. In these endeavours, however, I came up against many vested interests.

In regard to movement, which is the key to all military activity, I thought we could do better if we used more imagination and worked in greater co-ordination with the Railways. For example, I had noticed some years ago[7] that according to the existing plans, it would take us unnecessarily long time to concentrate our Armoured Division from its present location to the Indo-Pakistan border in the event of an emergency. I was quite sure that this schedule could be reduced drastically with some effort. Various senior Commanders in the Armoured Corps and in the Army, however, raised doubts on this point. They had resigned themselves to inordinate delay in this matter on the plea that there was insufficient rolling stock available and that there was nothing they could do about it. Actually, they had made no serious effort. They had never taken into confidence top officials in the Rail-

7 The time when I did not hold the authority to put this matter right.

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ways and had always kept the significance and the importance of the time factor in this hush-hush case to themselves. I confided in K. B. Mathur and, later in Karnail Singh, two successive and energetic Chairmen of the Railway Board, both possessing great drive and determination. I told them how urgent it was to speed up this move for the defence of India. They were patriotic enough to react positively at once and co-operated fully in my effort to accelerate this move.

I then embarked upon a speedy schedule, constructing new sidings with loading and unloading facilities for the Armoured Division by day and by night which did not exist till then; having new well-wagons manufactured at double quick-time, the cost of which was to be borne both by the Defence and the Railways; and also making use of the existing rolling stock, which had not been thought of before. Even the existing special type wagons meant for normal civil use were pressed into service with minor adjustments. We therefore did not have to construct new rolling stock for moving tanks and hence saved much money. I provided additional ramps, checked up the clearance of our armoured vehicles through various obstacles en route, had the relevant rail routes reconnoitred ensuring that they were able to sustain the much faster speeds I was going to demand from the trains carrying out this operational move; increased the speed of the necessary trains to double their older gait by laying down a quick procedure for changing engines and by other expedients. In order that the Armoured Division should move simultaneously by road and rail, I expedited the construction of by-passes to avoid going through crowded towns and over bridges across railway level crossings. By these simple but unconventional methods, and by instilling a sense of urgency in all concerned, I accelerated this move beyond the expectation of many[8].

8 For reasons of security, I cannot give here the actual figures.

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The Armoured Division and its illustrious patrons in the army who had done little about this matter so far resented the fact that their past apathy on this subject stood exposed. In fact, they kept saying that they did not want this 'hustling' and were content with their existing schedules. Despite their belly-aching, however, I went on rehearsing till the Armoured Division had mastered all the drills of this new and faster move, so urgent for our defence[9] (which paid us such rich dividends in the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965).

Ever since 1948, I had heard that Zojila Pass in Kashmir over 11,000 feet in altitude was open for traffic from only July to November each year. For the rest of the eight months in the year it remained blocked by snow. Everyone in the Army had taken this for granted, but I could not reconcile myself to the fact that any place should remain closed, in modern times, to military traffic for such a long stretch each year. I also found it difficult to accept that snow could not be removed with some modern mechanical means. When this subject came within my purview for the first time in 1959, I made up my mind to explode this myth. I asked my engineers, ably led by Maj Gen K. N. Dubey, to order special machinery from abroad for which I obtained Government sanction and took steps to ensure that we kept this pass open for a longer duration than before. By determined steps and constant supervision, we reversed the age-old time-table and planned to keep the Pass open for about eight months in the year instead of about four. Many die-hard prophets, of whom there is no dearth in any society, had predicted failure on my part, having stood inactively in this matter themselves for years.

Bijoo Patnaik, whom I had known for many years, and who had not yet become the Chief Minister, Orissa,

9 In this whole episode, Shiv Kishore, my Railway Adviser, gave me dynamic support.

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came to see me in my office one day. He was once an ace pilot and had carried out some daring escapades in Indonesia during that country's struggle for Independence and rescued some of its popular leaders. He told me, a fact which I knew, that owing to the limited resources of the Air Force, the External Affairs Ministry were maintaining the far-flung Assam Rifles military posts by air-drops in NEFA through the Kalinga Airways which was one of his concerns. Due to shortage of planes—which was, in turn, due to shortage of foreign exchange—the Kalinga Airways were unable to carry out this commitment fully. He, therefore, asked me if I could persuade my Defence Minister, Krishna Menon, to help in this matter by getting him the necessary foreign exchange for the purchase of the additional aircraft. This seemed a sensible proposition to me and hence I approached the Defence Minister, not knowing that I was treading on someone's toes. Krishna Menon told me that on no account was he prepared to help Kalinga Airways as it would indirectly mean that the Air Force, one of the Services under him, was incapable of carrying out this commitment. My plea was that one should not stand on false dignity in this matter which affected the defence of our country. No amount of argument on my part, however, was of any avail. The result was that the Assam Rifles posts remained inadequately supplied and in fact we were prevented at times from establishing more such posts, due to logistical reasons, which was operationally necessary.

Menon used to keep advocating cheap construction of buildings by lowering their specifications if necessary so that he could build the maximum in the sanctioned amounts. Many times I had violent differences with him as I supported the engineers who believed that speed, quality and cost should always go together and no one consideration should be unreasonably out of step with the other (though graft or cumbersome procedure were

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at times responsible for lack of speed and undue expense). Menon never seemed to see this theory and put speed and economy above other factors.

During Menon's visit to Srinagar in July 1959, Lt Gen S. D. Verma recommended to him that in view of acute shortage of accommodation which existed in Jammu and Kashmir, troops should be allowed to build in stations other than Jammu where Maj Gen Manekshaw was engaged already in a similar project enthusiastically. Manekshaw, who denounced this activity, in private professional military circles, actually took to it also, as everyone seemed to be doing it now and lest he was left behind. He hoped his project would receive at least some of the public attention which was focussed on 'Amar' not long ago. He had therefore 'acquiesced' instead of refusing to let his troops build and had taken to it like a duck takes to water, bidding adieu to his aversions on the subject. In Ferozepur, Maj Gen Harbakhsh Singh was working on another project where troops were building their own accommodation. So, there were many now in the field of construction apart from myself. The decision of using troops in these projects was, of course, that of Thimayya, who was then the Army Chief and with whose approval all of them were progressing.

Receiving General Verma's request to undertake such work, Menon asked me if I could take it on in other stations in Kashmir forthwith. I said I could do this in a few months' time and not forthwith because I had already in hand many projects and with my limited resources I could not cope with additional work till I had finished what was pending with me. Menon wrote on a file that my 'attitude was a little depressing and that it would be more heartening if administrative responsibilities and frustrations together with the uncanny inhibitory power of the chair did not damp my enthusiasm and vigour.' He taunted that 'perhaps I was beginning to feel the strain

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of over-work'. I wrote back to him, through Thimayya, that I had noted the various fears and misgivings expressed by him about me and that I was neither betraying any strain of over-work, frustration, nor any dampening of enthusiasm and vigour but was only trying to ensure that by undertaking more than I could chew, I did not embarrass him or the Army Chief in the public eye. Thimayya agreed with my reply. Menon did not continue this correspondence.

Menon was trying to ginger up many departments. In this process, he selected Rear Admiral Shankar[10] as his production chief (and Maj Gen Kapur—an officer of outstanding ability—as the CCR & D). As Shankar had to come from Calcutta to Delhi on transfer and as it took officers a long time before they got a residence allotted to them in Delhi, Menon was anxious that Shankar's case be treated with priority. As it happened, there were two General officers senior to Shankar on the list of the allotment of accommodation. They were Moti Sagar and Dubey. Menon ordered that Shankar should be allotted a bungalow over the heads of these two officers. I regretted my inability to carry out this order as it was unfair. Finding me adamant, Menon decided not to press this point, reversed his original orders and Shankar was given some other accommodation.

When Krishna Menon was appointed Defence Minister, it was a big challenge to him. He inherited a neglected Armed Force. In view of their belief in the creed of non-violence, our leaders had thought for years at a stretch that they would never require a defence force in the modern sense. Warfare had no place in India's philosophy and, therefore, we had no definite defence policy. As a result, no adequate defence system had been built between

10 His predecessor, Major General P. Narain, having left voluntarily.

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1947 and 1957. The Generals and their counterparts in the Navy and the Air Force had, more or less, been left to their own devices since Independence. Now they hoped that a man with Menon's reputation would at last get them their due share of attention from Government and thus solve some of their urgent problems.

Menon was a striking figure with a dishevelled appearance. Little escaped his eye or his ear. His emotions were written on his face and he could not hide his likes and dislikes. He could be hated or adored but never ignored. He seldom suffered fools. He was easily accessible, seeing princes and paupers alike. He delighted in fighting for those who had had a raw deal in life. He had a biting sense of humour, was quick in repartee but sensitive to criticism. His wit was typified by remarks like : 'It was immaterial to a fish whether you fried it in butter or margarine.' Or, 'I have never heard of a vegetarian tiger.' Once he snapped at a British delegate at the U.N. : 'I will not have you give me tips on the English language. I learnt it and did not pick it up like you...' Addressing Sir Pearson Dickson, the Chief Delegate from Britain, he said : 'I will appeal to you to exercise some degree of fairplay in dealing with different members of the Commonwealth...at least in public!' Once at a press conference in London, he said : 'There is nothing common in the Commonwealth... certainly not wealth.'

Menon alienated and antagonized people by sarcasm and unkind remarks. He was quick-tempered, stubborn and always at strife with someone. He would walk past his equals without a greeting and made many enemies by his arrogant behaviour.

Menon was sceptical by temperament with many whims and caprices and at times suspected his friends of disloyalty without any reason. It was not easy working with him. Few ever stood up to him worthily.

During the period under reference he was immaculately

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dressed and changed many times a day. His wardrobe abounded in a variety of Indian and Western attire, with assorted walking sticks, hats, and shoes. He was the envy of many well-dressed men. He had a craze for speed and had his cars driven at break-neck speed by specially picked military chauffeurs.

He did many things which were good[11] for India; in them, I helped him for all I was worth. He also did a few things, unintentionally perhaps, which I thought were not in our interests; in them, I opposed him. For instance, I gave him all the assistance I could in matters such as speedy establishment of many projects of military importance, quick transportation of troops to certain areas, progressive measures including logistic support to troops or rapid construction of their accommodation. I disagreed with him, however, when he favoured particular countries, to the exclusion of others, so far as importing defence equipment was concerned; when he dabbled in certain operational, military or technical matters without being familiar with all their implications, when he tried to build service accommodation of cheaper specifications which were liable to result in weaker structures; when he produced unessential items in defence installations which were his fads and a waste of effort, such as coffee or cooling machines (for which, ironically, I was assailed by the *Current*,[12] though I never at any time dealt with this matter or with production of any material); or for not letting essential military equipment be imported which in my opinion was inescapable for the defence of India.

He was a well-read man and an encyclopaedia on practically every subject under the sun such as science, philo-

11 Menon decided in 1961 to manufacture a Vickers tank for the army indigenously–to be known later as 'Vijayanta'–in India to replace our ageing fleet of armoured fighting vehicles.

12 A weekly magazine of Bombay.

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sophy, medicine, engineering, history, politics, economics, agriculture and animals. He had intimate knowledge of the intricacies of aircraft engines, armoured vehicles, submarines and wireless sets. No expert felt safe in his presence. In the midst of his multifarious preoccupations, I thought he could have paid a little more attention to important military subjects like operations, intelligence and training. If anyone made an effort to throw some light on them, Menon had little time for him.

His brain worked like a machine. I have seen him dictate in the middle of a meeting, urgent U.N. resolutions, immediate statements to be made in Parliament that day and replies to the questions of foreign correspondents—all in a row.

He was considerate to some of his subordinates but rude to others and often hurt their pride. Having done it, he felt sorry and tried to make amends.

He lives austerely in a small room in a modest bungalow, as he did even when he was Defence Minister, located strategically opposite what was once Nehru's residence as Prime Minister. It is littered with books, gadgets and papers. In the days when he was at the height of his power, he had a stream of visitors all the time: Ministers, politicians, scientists, students and destitutes who came to him with their personal problems.

He kept late hours at night to cope with his busy schedule, drank hot milk several times a day and many cups of tea. He took all sorts of sedatives and other medicines to get over his numerous ailments. He ran no regular kitchen in his house and ate no meals, living on sandwiches, biscuits and cashew-nuts. He never smoked or had any fruit and was a teetotaller. He was discussed in social and other circles all over the country and was the burning topic of the day.

He read thrillers while he travelled from one end of the globe to the other. He flew in Air Force planes, leaving

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Delhi at unearthly hours at night in order that he could reach his destination early the next day. He loved children who usually took a fancy to him. He sought popularity in various circles, shaking hands with high and low, patting children's cheeks and smiling patronizingly.

Menon had called me to his office one day. When I sat opposite him, I did so in a chair with a high back, by mistake, in which sat the Service Chiefs or others of similar status. Before he discussed any business, he addressed me sarcastically : 'General, this is Delhi, not Ambala (my last station).' I did not understand but replied : 'I hope I know my geography, Sir.' 'You are sitting on the wrong chair,' he pointed out rudely. I thought he need not have rubbed in this trivial point. After all, chairs were not thrones! Feeling slighted, I rose abruptly, left the 'wrong' chair and the room in a huff. I rushed out of the Secretariat and drove away in my car in a temper along the Grand Trunk Road. Menon probably never expected anyone retaliating like this and wondered where I had gone. He rang up my office and my home but failed to locate me. I came back to work about two hours later and found more than one message from Menon wanting me to see him as soon as I returned. As I still felt peeved, I sent back a reply that as my immediate boss was Thimayya (and not Menon), he should send for me thereafter through the former and not directly. He then asked Thimayya to see him along with me for a discussion of some administrative matters with which I was concerned. Thimayya and I went to see him together and after we had finished our business, he asked Thimayya to leave. When alone, he questioned why I had belittled his position earlier by walking out of his room so abruptly. I reminded him that everyone held some position in life and deserved consideration and that whereas I had a sense of humour, I was not prepared to be ridiculed. After some recriminations, we shook hands and forgot this affair. It was perhaps Menon's brand of

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humour to have such digs at people.

Menon often called important secretaries from various Ministries and Generals to make his meetings appear imposing. He would collect the three Chiefs of Staff, the Cabinet, Foreign, Home and Defence Secretaries, Director of the Intelligence Bureau, and other similar dignitaries, whenever he could and on different occasions. If all were not available, at least some of them came and added colour to his meetings. He would call them on the pretext that some urgent matter needed immediate discussion. When everyone had assembled, however, he would appear bored, as if some rif-raff were sitting around him, uninvited, and sometimes dozed off perhaps because of over-work or due to the sedatives he had taken earlier. If he flung a stinging thrust at someone and the victim discreetly kept quiet, Menon scored a point. If the former recoiled, Menon would wink at him smilingly, in full view of all present, with one or both eyes, as if to say that he was only kidding.

There was seldom any agenda or minutes of his meetings as he was allergic to both. They commenced quietly but developed into a battle of wits or a brawl. He always blamed someone at the end and congratulated hardly anyone. There were frayed tempers and heated arguments as experts were flouted. Once someone tape-recorded the proceedings of a particular meeting in which he had said uncomplimentary things about the Service Chiefs. There was quite a row about this matter.

If a General was speaking in a meeting and saying, for instance, 'I think...,' he would snap: 'Soldiers are incapable of thinking.' In another meeting, if an Admiral happened to say 'The Navy...', Menon would interrupt and complete the sentence sarcastically: 'Should be at the bottom of the sea.' When the recipients of these rebuffs left Menon's room, they usually related tall stories to their friends giving graphic descriptions of their supposed-

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ly fierce encounters with him and boasting of their imaginary bouts with Menon which had in fact never taken place! There were a few[13] who did give vent to their feelings in his presence but, as a rule, there were too many time-servers to whom their careers meant more than a slight and who took things lying down.

When you entered Menon's office to keep an appointment, you saw an array of telephones on his table which kept ringing all the time. He then played with you like a cat plays with a rat. Rarely you came back unscathed.

If he wanted not to be understood, he would mumble his words in a garbled manner, compelling you to strain your ears and beg his pardon. Only discretion on your part saved the day.

He was bubbling with new ideas and obsessed with novel schemes. It was he who really stepped up the Defence production for the first time. He was surrounded by hectic activity, consulting experts, giving orders and receiving visitors at all hours of the day and night. He revelled in controversy, returning battered from Parliament or a Party meeting and would fret and fume in his office, cursing all and sundry.

Whenever he left India from Palam airport, a great ceremony ensued. Top brass from the Civil and the Forces, press photographers and friends would assemble. He would rush up to his confidants and publicly whisper in their ear supposedly urgent and secret matters (which impressed the onlookers) and rebuked them 'affectionately' for having taken the trouble to come to see him off.

He had enough horse sense to know that he should keep on the right side of all influential Chief Ministers of States and went out of his way to do what he could for men like Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Kairon, Patnaik,

13 There were also Thapar and Sarin who reacted strongly whenever Menon took any liberties with them.

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Kamraj and B. C. Roy. He also knew that he must never tread on the toes of Nehru who thought well of him and was perhaps his only important support. Within the Cabinet, Menon displayed a healthy respect for Azad, Pant and only a few others but treated most of his colleagues as door-mats. There was a deadly rivalry between him and Morarji Desai. Each was convinced that the other stood in his way to India's crown. In this process, our national interests were often hurt. There were Krishnamachari and Ashok Sen who were once his favourites but later failed to see eye to eye with him. Malviya was his blue-eyed boy.

Menon's relations with President Radhakrishnan were at best so so. With this and his other political problems, he had to do some tight rope-walking in his varied activities.

He had become Nehru's right-hand man and his intellectual companion. His strong position with Nehru stemmed from the latter's belief that he interpreted his ethics, ideologies and policies more faithfully than any other man. He also remembered the persistent manner in which Menon resolutely pressed the case of India's freedom in England from 1924 for twenty-three years, toiling through a life of austerity. Nehru also remembered how in 1935 Menon had worked as literary agent to him for the publication of his various books. Menon was a well-known figure in London's publishing world and had arranged for the publication of Nehru's autobiography by Bodley Head for which he acted as the Editorial Adviser. He also suggested certain revisions of Nehru's *Glimpses of World History*. Nehru and Menon shared many common interests and were reflections of each other intellectually, though they were poles apart in their personal behaviour and pursuits.

Due to his influence with Nehru and his position in international affairs, he wielded great prestige in the External Affairs Ministry and had a big say in all that went

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on there. As a result, senior foreign service officers put out the red carpet for him on all occasions and acknowledged him as their uncrowned king, though officially he held no recognized position there. He enjoyed unusual protocol in Kashmir where it had become a practice for their whole Cabinet to turn out to receive him whenever he visited this beautiful land. This was done because of his position with Nehru as also for his brilliant projection of the Kashmir case in International circles year after year. He took these courtesies in his stride. Most politicians and high officials played up to him as Nehru's pet but never admitted doing so. There were others who criticised him in desperation because they were disturbed at his ability to influence our fundamental policies effectively.

Menon was overawed in Nehru's presence. The latter somehow bowled him over. If he was giving a good speech and Nehru happened to appear while he spoke, he would at once begin to fumble and lose his trend of thought. Nehru always queered his pitch. When ill, he craved for Nehru to see him in that plight. The latter generally obliged.

A confirmed Socialist, his position in India, so far as the Left Wing was concerned, has always been strong. Vested interests built many rumours about him and recognized in him an adversary who was a threat to their very survival. Powerful business magnates who controlled the Press became more and more vicious in their attacks on him. He was treated as anathema by the Right Wing as they thought he stood between them and the economic prosperity of the country. He had attained popularity among the youth of India by his stout defence of the Kashmir case at the United Nations.

The oft-repeated allegation by the Western countries that Menon was working against the interests of India made him livid with anger and consequently affected his behaviour towards them internationally. A situation

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therefore grew where Menon was being disliked in circles in which he was anxious to be liked though on his own terms.

Perhaps for the reasons I have outlined above, Menon had no love lost for the United States of America which to him was like a red rag to a bull. If anyone argued with him in support of USA, he would breathe fire and thunder. He took the Americans to task, at home and abroad, rebuked their journalists for putting questions he did not relish and doubted every move they made. He ridiculed their way of life and considered that India should never have anything to do with them. He was naturally despised in that country. They called him a villain, a wasp and the great 'I'. He, however, always spoke about USSR reverentially and was therefore popular in that country. He was liked by the communist countries perhaps more than any other important Indian, though he seldom paid them a visit. He was unpopular in the western world in varying degrees. The non-aligned world tolerated him as he was their champion but disapproved his patronizing manner.

Menon produced varying reactions in USA. A taxi driver once told me in New York: 'I know that guy Menon has no time for us. But he sure has brains...if only he was our Secretary of State, we would land on the moon before those God-damned Russians.'

An American attorney told me he did not realize he was sitting next to Menon in a flight from New York to Chicago. When the plane had become airborne, he thought he would make 'this foreigner' feel at home by making conversation with him and so asked Menon :

'How long have you been in the States?'

'Ten days,' Menon replied dryly.

'What are you doing here?' the American went on.

'Working,' Menon growled.

'What sort of work?' persisted the American.

'United Nations,' Menon replied briefly.

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'Member of a delegation?' the American continued.

'No. Leader of the Indian Delegation! Any more questions?' Menon snapped. The American nearly died of shock. He was only trying to be chatty to a foreigner and in the process had collided against one who was certainly not one of America's friends!

He was contemptuous of most of his Cabinet colleagues as he thought they did not understand much of anything. They, in turn, resented his swagger and did everything to break his image. They also thought he stood between them and Nehru whom some of them aspired to succeed. Menon mocked at their cheek for aspiring so high despite, he said, their notable unworthiness. His colleagues had an inferiority complex vis-a-vis him for many reasons. Some of them wore crumpled clothes and went at times unshaven to ceremonial functions at Rashtrapati Bhavan. It is like invitees going to Buckingham Palace or the White House in shabby clothes. Menon noticed these traits in them and sometimes said, in jest, that they were only fit for coffins!

Many of his colleagues, he said, were faddists, living in ostentatious bungalows parsimoniously and entertaining rarely. Some of them had awkward eating habits which created problems for their hosts. They talked big but their deeds were feeble and they worked at a leisurely pace. Most of them slept soundly despite any crisis in the country. They went about with docile smiles and with folded hands, speaking with their tongue in the cheek, mincing their words. They would praise Nehru openly but denounce him behind his back. They only spoke bravely and came out in the open when they thought that public opinion was on their side and they were on a perfectly safe wicket, and when their adversary was down and out. They loved shouting slogans and cliches along with the mobs but did many things on the sly.

If you had a violent argument with Menon, you would

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expect him to sulk, which he did at times, but on other occasions, he sent you, instead, a box of expensive chocolates as a present, a sporting gesture or as an act of appeasement.

His routine was hectic, sleeping little at nights, dozing through many engagements during the day, making up part of his lost sleep, displaying endless energy and going about like a whirl-wind, attending several functions, including opening ceremonies of which there is no dearth in India; holding diplomatic discussions, rebuking ambassadors whose diplomacy he did not approve, shouting at people, sometimes without reason, with fire shining in his eyes, tripping over pieces of furniture in a hurry and blaming others.

He would, in certain situations, pretend he did not know when he in fact knew. He would threaten to see Nehru in certain situations and obtain his orders when actually he had no intention of doing so. He only used this as a threat. He would faint at times, recovering rapidly and displaying remarkable powers of recuperation. He staggered through many painful illnesses, remaining in the saddle while he ailed. He would set impossible tasks to people. He would sometimes convey certain information in the requisite quarters and later pretend complete ignorance. He would send for senior Generals and civil servants on Sunday afternoons and at awkward times of other days and nights to discuss what he described as urgent problems but which were sometimes only trivialities. He would interfere with people's rest and recreation which they resented. It was because he did not know himself what rest meant.

He selected a motley crowd on his staff, some talented men but others of no consequence. His critics, however, put them all in the same bag and denounced them alike.

My telephone woke me up at three o'clock one morning.

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'Menon speaking,' the voice said, 'could you come over to my house for a few minutes just now? I have something important.'

'I will be there right away,' I replied.

As I had a temperature of 102 degrees then, I put on a thick muffler around my neck and sufficient clothes before I drove up to Menon. There he was, surrounded by files, having worked all night, ready to leave India for the U.N., early next monring.

'What is the exact position about the Polish horses?' He asked.

'Polish Horses?' I questioned in surprise. 'I haven't the foggiest idea. I don't deal with horses.It is General Kochhar's[14] subject.'

'I am so sorry, General, I bothered you at such a late hour,' He grieved. But as he spoke to me, he put his hand on mine, in a friendly gesture, as he often did, and found it warmer than usual.

'You have fever!' He exclaimed.

'I have,' I admitted.

'Good God!' He exclaimed. 'Why didn't you tell me before you came here?' He asked.

I said nothing.

The next morning he went to New York via London. Four days later, I received a fat parcel from the local Air India office. There were two lovely jaegar pull-overs he had sent to me from London, with his compliments. They were in my favourite colours and were tokens of his regret for having disturbed me late at night when I had fever. He periodically gave gifts to Thapar, Sarin and some others as gestures of goodwill.

Menon wrote many unpleasant notes on files. When he addressed one to me, the tone of my reply was reciprocal. When he asked me why I had written such a note and found me unrepentant, he furiously flung the file at me.

14 Quartermaster General

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As I did not like anyone throwing things at me, I took exception to this and threw it out of the room. Menon could have eaten me alive for my cheek.

Menon could have won the unstinted loyalty of all ranks in the Forces if he had dealt with them gently. He could be described as universally popular in the Services when he first came. But due to indifferent man-management, his popularity began to wane. Steadily, things came to such a pass that while he had his supporters, he began to be hated by others. Political intrigue exploited this situation, which Menon could well have prevented with better public relations, like some others have done.

I began hearing rumours in various circles that I had been promoted by Menon against the wishes of Thimayya. I thought if this was true it would be embarrassing and wrong for me to continue serving on Thimayya's staff. I, therefore, saw him in his office and conveyed to him what I had heard and how I felt. He told me that there were two vacancies in the Lt General's rank for which he had put up a panel of three names : those of Major Generals Gyani, Kumaramangalam and mine, in strict order of seniority (though Kumaramangalam and I bore identical dates of seniority). Menon pointed out, however, that according to the yard-stick of promotion, an officer was to have commanded a division and as Gyani had not done so, he did not see how he could be promoted. It was, therefore, decided by Menon and Thimayya jointly that Kumaramangalam and I should be promoted. (Gyani was also promoted a few months later after he had commanded a division for a few months.) Thimayya said that my promotion had taken place with his concurrence and not against his wishes and that I should have no qualms of conscience in this matter.

There were about a dozen officers whom both Kumara-

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mangalam and I had superseded. Yet a campaign was launched, singling out only my name as if I was doing so through manipulation and not on merit. Not a finger was raised towards Kumaramangalam who had also superseded the same officers along with me. Kumaramangalam and I were commissioned on the same date and were of identical seniority. He graduated from Woolwich and I from Sandhurst. We had appeared in two different Passing Out examinations and he had not passed out higher than me. He was therefore not 'senior' to me—as some people held—and his name was placed above mine in the Army List only because his arm was Artillery and mine was Infantry, the former coming ahead of the latter only procedurally and in the Protocol of the order of precedence.

I do not think people knew that I had quick promotion many times and superseded many on the basis of my record of service in my career and even before Menon appeared on the scene. For instance, I was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel at the age of thirty when I had only nine and a half years' service in 1942 and to that of Brigadier at the age of thirty-six when I had only fifteen years' service in 1948. When I was promoted as Major General at the age of forty-three and half I had 23 years service in 1956. On each of these occasions I had superseded many officers. However, when I became a Lieutenant General in 1959, after twenty-six years service, at the age of forty-seven and superseded some more officers, on the merit of my record of service and along with Kumaramangalam, there was an uproar—only against me—incited by some of my colleagues in the Army who wanted to create an impression that I, an 'ordinary' officer, had been suddenly brought into prominence by Menon through 'political interference'.

It was said that I had been promoted above the heads of some who had better records of service than mine.

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Who were these 'better' men and how were their overall records better than mine? (Had anyone bothered to scrutinize my[15] dossier?) If consuming alcohol or indulging in similar relaxations were to be the criteria for advancement to higher ranks, in which some of them did extremely well, they certainly deserved accelerated promotion.

There was a furore over the promotion and supersession of a few major generals both in the Press and the Parliament. It had been said by some that dissatisfaction had been growing in the Army in this regard since Menon took over. This dissatisfaction had, in fact, reared up its head long before and could not be due to the supersession of a few senior Generals. Before Government promotes officers to the top rank of the Army, they have to take into account merit, seniority and other factors. I think, the only officers who were complaining were those personally affected who created an impression that there was 'general' discontentment in the Army.

The fact of the matter is that if any injustice had been done for many years long before and even after Krishna Menon came as Defence Minister, under successive Chiefs of Army Staff, it was to officers of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. The Selection Board, which went into the cases of these officers, used to spend between ten to fifteen minutes to consider the case of each officer (and perhaps does the same even today). How could this Board assess the merits of officers with seventeen to eighteen years service so hastily? Consequently, ad hoc selections were made and a number of officers were granted substantive rank in the grade of Lieutenant Colonel who had failed in their Promotion Examination or the Senior Officers Course or had not attended the latter, had not done the

15 It has been said both by Menon and Chavan in the Parliament that promotions beyond the rank of Lieutenant Colonel involved the question of leadership and were made through a Selection Board based on the Officers' Annual Confidential Reports (and not only on seniority).

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Staff College nor held a Graded Staff appointment. Many of them had low Medical category and had not commanded a unit. Despite this, many of them were promoted. There was, therefore, no proper yardstick being exercised even for the rank of Lieutenant Colonel when such a large number of officers were involved. It is due to this sort of mismanagement that the real discontentment in the officer ranks in the Army arose. (There have been many questionable promotions of senior officers in the Army from 1963 to 1966—due to a variable yardstick—resulting in grave resentment. No one outside the Army has, however, raised, on this account, an uproar on any public forum, as was done more than once during 1959–62.)

In view of my conversation with Thimayya, earlier, on the subject of my promotion, I was surprised when about ten weeks later, I saw the headlines in the *Statesman* of 1 September: THIMAYYA RESIGNS OVER RECENT PROMOTIONS. A sensational story said Thimayya was quitting his post as Menon had unduly interfered in the recent senior army promotions. This was contrary to what Thimayya had told me. I also wondered why he had waited all these weeks before he took this drastic step. If he had some differences with Menon, why did he not act immediately? May be, he was encouraged to take this step at this psychological moment by some interested parties. However, I thought it was best to talk it over with him. He was still in bed when I went over to his house and showed him the newspaper. I reminded him that since he had told me only a few weeks earlier that he had no difference of opinion with Menon in respect of my promotion, how was it that he was now—as the *Statesman* had reported—making an issue of the same case? He denied having told anyone that he had resigned due to differences with Menon on the question of promotions and therefore did not understand why the *Statesman* had published this story. He admitted he had told Nehru he could not temperamentally get on

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with Menon and also because he kept unearthly hours of work, frequently called him for consultations on unimportant issues during hours of his relaxation and that he was not prepared to put up with this situation any longer. I then gave Thimayya my written resignation with the request that if his own went through, mine should also be accepted. I said that if this was not done, people would not understand how I could continue serving, when my Chief had to quit his post on my account. They would never know the truth. It was, therefore, in the fitness of things, under the circumstances, that we both went out of service together. Thimayya said he appreciated my gesture. Prem Bhatia published the story about my resignation, roughly as stated above, in the *Times of India* which was not contradicted by Thimayya.

I happened to see Nehru the same day in some other context. During his conversation he told me that Thimayya had seen him and complained of temperamental incompatibility with Menon. Nehru asked me if I knew of any other reasons which might have caused a rift between them, but I could throw no more light on the subject. Nehru spoke to Menon about this matter. Menon protested to Thimayya for his having seen Nehru over his head. Thimayya submitted his resignation to Nehru, soon after, this time in writing, over the head of Menon, his Defence Minister. Nehru sent for Thimayya and pointed out the impropriety of his action, based on trivial reasons, especially when India was facing threats by China and Pakistan and asked him to withdraw his resignation, which he did. Later, Nehru condemned this step by Thimayya in Parliament and deprecated soldiers coercing the Civil authority which must remain supreme in a democracy. This action of Thimayya—of resigning first and withdrawing his resignation later—did not enhance his popularity.

I was now arousing the watchfulness of my foes and became subject to further propaganda. One of the cam-

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paigners against me was the *Current*, an English weekly from Bombay, which started publishing stories against me full of distortion of facts inspired by some of my rivals in the Army or others. When a friend of mine asked me why D. F. Karaka, editor of the *Current*, was after my blood, I was reminded of a story. When someone told Ishwar Chander, the renowned social reformer, that a certain person had been persistently maligning him, he was amazed and exclaimed: 'Why is *he* doing this to me? I have never done him any good turn!'

I represented to Thimayya, Menon and Nehru, that either I or Government should sue the *Current* for publishing various things about me which were not true. Nehru said there was no question of my litigating and that he would defend me himself in public at a suitable opportunity. In the meantime, these slanderous attacks continued.

In its edition of 26 August 1959, the *Current* made many allegations against me. Among other things it said that Government had recalled me from Washington in 1948. This was not so. I had come back to India at my own request, which was approved by Nehru (and of which I have documentary evidence), in order to serve in the Kashmir war. It said in effect that I did not have sufficient experience of commanding smaller infantry units before assuming command of a brigade. As a matter of fact, I had commanded an Infantry platoon and a company and missed the command of an infantry battalion,[16] under government orders as explained earlier. But before I could take over the Battalion, I was sent by Government as free India's first Military Attache to Washington in the rank of Colonel. On return, I was again being given command of a battalion by military authorities, when Government insisted that I should accept the appointment of Commander, Jammu and Kashmir Militia during the operations in Kashmir.

16 I was not alone in this respect. One of my colleagues, Lt Gen Manekshaw, had also never commanded a Battalion.

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It was stated I had seen little or no war service. This was untrue. There were only three occasions on which the present generation in the Indian Army could have seen war: skirmishes in the North Western Frontier of India; operations in World War II and the Kashmir operations. I had been in all the three.

It was alleged that I had spent much time in staging plays. Actually, dramatics was my hobby, as it was of many other army officers. I had staged a play called *Anarkali* in Delhi in 1952 (seven years ago!) and two or three during earlier years. Staging these few plays in twenty years' time could not have had much effect on my military activities. In any case, whether I was staging plays or painting pictures in my spare time, my worst enemies will concede that a soldier also can have some hobbies in his spare time and that I never spared myself in sweating on my official duties which did not suffer due to my relaxations. Yet some sections of the Indian press such as the *Current* of Bombay were raising their fingers at my staging a play or two in my spare time and leaving out many of my professional activities in the service of my country worthier of note.

It was stated that I did not have sufficient military background when I got command of a division. In fact, I had commanded an Infantry Brigade for three and half years just before.

It was said that I had commanded an Infantry division for only two years, which I had spent in building houses. In fact, I had commanded a division for nearly thirty-four months, out of which I had spent only seven months on building houses for my men, and during the remaining twenty-seven, I was employed in normal military duties and major military training events.

The *Current* went on to say that I had professed to do project 'Amar' on a no-cost basis. At no stage had I made such a promise. My estimate was to do it in just over rupees one crore as against the larger official estimates.

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I was supposed to have indulged in a gross misuse of troops. Actually, it was not I who had taken the decision to employ the troops on this project; it was that of Government and the army: Menon, Thimayya, Kalwant Singh and Chaudhuri, my superior authorities. It therefore had full support.

Another charge against me was that I had employed the manpower of my entire Division (20,000 men) to build the Defence Pavilion in 1958. This was not so. Apart from a few hundred troops, this project was done through civil labour.

The *Current* stated that my recent promotion to Lt General's rank had been unfair because I had gone over the heads of about twelve other Generals who had better records of service and qualifications than I. This was not so. I have already explained the correct position earlier. There were many other inaccuracies in this article. For instance, that I had started my service in the Cavalry. Actually, I had started it in the Infantry (Rajputana Rifles); that I was transferred to the ASC which held better prospects for a bright young officer. I have already explained the compelling circumstances under which I was temporarily transferred to the ASC. It then said that I was on the Pay Commission. In fact, I was never on such a Commission. All these statements were, therefore, entirely incorrect.

Thimayya wrote in a note—the copy of which I still have—to Menon that this article in the *Current* was full of distortion of facts which would jeopardize my reputation. He therefore recommended that 'Government might consider taking suitable action against the Editor of the *Current,* as such slanderous attacks on senior army officers must have demoralizing repercussions on members of the Armed Forces and the public'. He requested permission to issue a press statement to clear my position. This was never given, as Nehru said he would take this point up personally in my defence in one of his monthly press conferences.

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It would be interesting to know that D. F. Karaka, Editor of the *Current,* who had published several articles against me in his paper, wrote to me on 13 February 1960:

> ..I learnt yesterday from a source close to the Army Headquarters (perhaps, similar sources had inspired other articles) that our story "Asses for the Army", published in *Current* of December 30, 1959, was inaccurate, particularly in so far as you were concerned...I therefore take this opportunity of writing to you personally to say that we are ever-ready to correct and make amends for any mistakes that we may make and shall be grateful if you would indicate to me where we have been wrong...If...due to over-enthusiasm on the part of our correspondents we err, it is my duty as Editor to see that such mistakes are put right.
>
> You might care to verify my bonafides with your Chief, General Thimayya, to whom I am taking the liberty of sending a copy of this letter.

(Thimayya conveyed to me officially on 24 February 1960, that he could not guarantee the bonafides of Karaka and did not understand what Karaka exactly meant.)

Before Karaka wrote this letter to me, three articles had appeared in the *Current* dated 26 August, 18 November, and 30 December 1959, making wild allegations against me.

In a press conference held by Nehru in Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi on 24 February 1960, he said:

> Sometime back, my attention was drawn to a series of articles (in *Current*) attacking one of our senior Generals, Lt General B.M. Kaul... casting aspersions on such (defence) persons is most unfair and objectionable. It becomes worse when wrong facts are given. Lt General Kaul is one of our ablest and most energetic Generals...I do not want political arguments, all types of charges and counter-charges against our defence services as far as possible...A charge was made about his out-of-turn promotion, that he had no experience of active service...I was surprised when my attention was drawn to it. There is this man who has put in a good deal of active service not only in Burma, in the last War, but in the former North Western Frontier Province, and, later, in the Kashmir operations. He was our Military Attache in Washington, when the trouble in Kashmir began. He sought resign from the soft job to be sent to the front, and when we did permit him, he came and was sent to

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the front. Even before that, in Burma and NWFP, he had seen...active service...He was accused of not having commanded...He had commanded...a platoon, company, brigade and division...Statements were made which have absolutely no factual basis...

When Nehru was asked by a correspondent in this press conference, whether I had been promoted out of turn, he said... that he had already told the Parliament... that there was no 'in turn' promotion in the higher ranks of the Army, otherwise the Army would turn into a lot of dunderheads, if everyone, whether he was clever or a fool, was promoted equally. This was obviously not so. He said we went about laying stress on merit and, therefore, in the Army promotions were made... on the basis of merit. The higher one went, he said, the stricter were the tests.

In the British, American or Russian Armies, as in many others, promotion to higher ranks is on merit and not only on seniority. In 1964, the American Army Chief, General Johnson (no relation of President Johnson), superseded forty officers including twelve Generals to be selected for that post. When Maxwell Taylor was appointed as Ambassador in Vietnam, General Wheeler succeeded him as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff superseding over a dozen Generals. Yet on both these occasions, none raised a hue and cry as supersession is accepted in USA as in other countries as a frequent occurrence. (Auchinleck and Mountbatten had superseded scores of officers in their time.) It is only through supersession that bright soldiers rose high. This fact was not realized in India during 1959-62 (though thereafter supersessions seem to be accepted as a matter of course. In any hierarchy, the higher ranks must and are filled by selection and not by seniority).

Nehru went on to say that this particular appointment was made out of a panel of three Major Generals recommended by the Army Chief...out of which two were chosen, including Kaul. Even the third (Gyani) was now being (promoted) and sent to command our troops in

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Gaza. (He was not qualified for this promotion as I have explained elsewhere.) Nehru ended up by saying :

> Kaul *was given* a rather novel task to find residences for our troops suffering from lack of accommodation...poor troops who had spent years...in Kashmir, or in Naga Hills, came back and could not have houses in which to live and no family life...so it was decided that...the soldiers should be asked to build for themselves. General Kaul was put in charge of it. Nobody forced the soldiers to do this. It was a voluntary job...it was a very fine job. Now some propaganda was going on that these houses were leaky and not good. It was quite absurd. I had them examined...It was said that the soldiers' training suffered by doing this. That again was quite wrong...I am really amazed the way we in our country have got into the habit of running ourselves down all the time... But we seem to delight in doing it.

After conquering Tibet, when the Chinese wanted to indoctrinate its people, their efforts met with heavy weather. They, therefore, thought that Dalai Lama's[17] removal from Lhasa to Peking would perhaps facilitate the process of spreading their gospel in Tibet. Hints to that effect were accordingly dropped by them to the Tibetan High Command. The Dalai Lama's followers then began to fear that his continued stay in Lhasa would be dangerous to his life. In the meantime, the Chinese Military Commander of

17 The present Dalai Lama is the fourteenth of the line and was born on 6 June 1935. Before the Chinese overran Tibet, his authority extended over 110 dzongs or counties. His name is Jetsum Jampal Ngawang Lobsang Vishey Tenzing Gyatso Sisunwangur Tshumpa Getson Mapal Dhepal Sango.

Nehru was unhappy with the manner in which China had occupied and forced an agreement on the Dalai Lama in May 1951 but there was little he could do about it. He, therefore, tried the next best course, i.e., to persuade China to treat Tibet as an autonomous region. In 1954, when Chou met him at Delhi, he told Nehru that Tibet was not a province of China but an autonomous region and China did not wish to force the pace of progress in Tibet or change their religion or their way of life. He went to the extent of saying that it would take fifty years to introduce socialism in Tibet!

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Lhasa 'invited' the Dalai Lama to a party and asked him to come unescorted. When his friends heard this, they feared that he would be kidnapped to Peking and hence decided in a secret meeting that he should leave Lhasa without delay and seek refuge in India. This was easier said than done. Firstly, the news had to be kept totally secret. Secondly, when he left with his followers and personal belongings, his caravan was liable to be spotted from miles by the Chinese forces guarding the border. And, lastly, such a trip would be a major physical undertaking.

The Dalai Lama with an advance guard of about 100 mounted troops left Lhasa along with his family in the small hours of a certain morning in 1959. He left a rear guard behind him to intercept any Chinese who might pursue him in flight. This rear guard was attacked by the Chinese whom it kept at bay till the Dalai Lama was well away. (There were 50,000 Chinese in Lhasa when the Dalai Lama escaped.) The Chinese prey thus slipped out of their fingers much to their annoyance, and reached India in March 1959 via Chothang-Mo in NEFA. Now that he had gone, they began to demolish his image systematically. They taught the children in the schools they had opened in Tibet how to undermine his authority, which they were trying to replace with their own. They alleged he had deserted the Tibetans at a critical time and asked that if the Dalai Lama was an incarnation of God, why should he be afraid of anything and run away? Further, the Tibetans were not allowed to forget the fact that China was a great country 'with equal opportunity for all' with whom it was in the interests of Tibet to unify. They tried to convince the Tibetans that hope lay only in the People's Republic of China, and not in the Dalai Lama.

The Chinese had sealed routes through all known passes—which they were guarding. Thousands of Tibetans sought refuge in India and in escaping from Tibet made for the most difficult passes with the hardest going to avoid

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the Chinese. They moved mostly by night and found it difficult to judge landmarks in the dark. They had no maps and followed streams for guidance. After weathering many storms and wading through waist deep snow and experiencing extreme physical and climatic hardships in the severity of winter, they started entering India from many points in NEFA. The Chinese sent us a message that the Tibetan refugees who had entered our territory near Long-ju and elsewhere should be sent back to Tibet. They alleged that they were mostly Khampas. We replied that as they had sought asylum in our country, there was no question of our 'returning' them.

Soon after, the Chinese intruded into our NEFA border at Long-ju. Nehru was being questioned about these matters in the Parliament and elsewhere. During this period, he asked me a few questions about Long-ju. I could throw little light on this subject as I had no personal knowledge, I, however, offered to go there and return with a detailed report. Nehru said he would be glad if I could do this. He added he had been moved at a large number of Tibetans having sought safety in India and who now faced an uncertain future. He, therefore, asked me if I could, apart from visiting the Long-ju area, see their camp at Missamari on the way and consider how they could be rehabilitated.

The next day I asked Thimayya's permission to undertake this trip as also to visit NEFA generally, the Long-ju area in particular and also Nagaland for administrative reasons, as a part of my normal duties as Quartermaster General. Thimayya gave me the necessary permission. I had heard fantastic accounts of how Long-ju's approaches were supposed to be precarious and how inaccessible this area was generally.

I flew from Delhi and visited the Tibetan Camp at Missamari in which there were 140 women and nearly 3,000 men, including a member of the Kashag (Minister of Tibetan Government). I gathered they had first refused

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to do any work which was given to them, taking it as infra-dig but later reconciled themselves in this respect. They were hefty individuals, simple in disposition and deeply respectful, sticking out their tongues as a token of salutation. They measured distance in terms of days' marches and followed the sun's shadow to indicate direction. Nearly 12,000 Tibetans had left their hearths and homes and came out here either because they had no faith in the Chinese regime in Tibet or because they were subjected to numerous atrocities. Many more would have come if they could procure sufficient arms and ammunition to fight their way through the Chinese guarding the various exits from Tibet.

From the Tibetan Camp at Missamari, I went to Nagaland. This State has a population of nearly 450,000 and its area is 6,600 square miles. It has three districts: Kohima, Mokokchong and Tuensang and many tribes. The prominent amongst them are Aos, Angamis, Lothas, Konyaks and Semas. They are physically and morally courageous. Their vocation is mainly agriculture and they have their own code of law. They celebrate festivals with seasons. Most of them believe in spirits and ancestor worship. In Kohima and Mokokchong about thirty per cent are converts to Christianity.

The Nagas had never been under anyone's strict administrative control in the past. They therefore resented our calling them citizens of free India after partition. They began to grow suspicious and react violently to our projects designed towards their progress and their hostility towards us grew into an armed rebellion. Their slogan was : Free Nagaland. Educated Nagas had been agitating for independence for long. As far back as 1929, they had put up their case for independence to Sir John Simon. They had also seen Gandhi in this connection.

The leader of their rebellion against us was Phizo, who had been a Subedar in the Indian National Army

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during World War II and who had acquired the guerrilla technique of liberating areas. In 1955, he inspired a hate campaign against us and disturbances commenced in the Tuensang District. When our efforts to convey to them that they were already free, failed and resulted in violence on their part, only then were we compelled to resort to military operations against them in 1956. We knew that they were not our enemies in the accepted sense but were only our misguided countrymen whom we wished to win back to our fold.

When a vote was taken among the tribal representatives in the First Naga Convention in 1957, the majority voted for remaining within India. Another convention was held on 22 October 1959, when representatives of all tribes agreed unanimously to become a part of India.Within a few days of this convention, I was in Kohima where I met the civil and military authorities and went round its defences. I saw the famous cemetery with stirring epitaphs on the graves of those who had laid down their lives in defending this town against the Japanese during World War II. I visited the picturesque Imphal, the capital of Manipur State, where the main purpose of life seems to be music and dancing. Graceful girls performing lovely dances in colourful costumes amidst the decor presented by nature of luscious hills and lakes which one sees here are simply irresistible. I also went to Mokokchong and Tuensang. Mokokchong is situated on the top of a hill. As it was covered with cloud, my helicopter was unable to spot its landing ground and nearly force-landed in an adjacent nullah-bed. I saw Ghas Pani, and also visited the unfriendly villages of Kidima and Chakabama.

After this trip of Nagaland, I was doubtful if military measures could ever solve this political problem. Our policy towards Nagaland is commendable but those who implement it must do so faithfully. If we take punitive measures against the Nagas, such as starving them,

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grouping[18] or surrounding their villages, destroying their crops, and follow General Robert's policy of 'shoot the shits,' it will only result in perpetuating their hostility against us rather than removing it. If we subjugate these proud and brave people, we would only create a problem on our borders of having perpetual collaborators with our future enemies in this part of the world. If we want the situation to improve and not worsen, the answer lies in negotiation and persuasion. Use of force never succeeds anywhere in creating loyal citizens.

From Nagaland, I went to NEFA. This North East Frontier Agency is bounded by Bhutan, Tibet and Burma, is 25,000 square miles in area with a population of 500,000 and is similar to Nagaland in many respects. There are five districts in NEFA, known after the rivers which flow through them: Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit and Tirap. Their villages are run by Gams (village elders who are not paid Government servants). They are, however, recognized by Government and given a certificate and a red Coat as symbols of authority. These villages are administered by a Council (Kebang). The people are a happy lot with a strong sense of personal freedom and tribal loyalty. They are simple, straight and honest in their dealings and place great reliance on the spoken word (which is contrary to what most civilized people do). They react strongly to any interference with their land or womenfolk.

Their staple diet is rice with chillies and some salt, sometime supplemented by smoked fish and edible roots or bamboo shoots. Meat and milk are scarce. Eggs and chicken are not available as they are used for religious purposes. They drink rice or millet beer. They have community dances in which men and women sing a chorus and circle around a leader who chants the verses. They have a strong sense of tribal ownership of forests and

18 Isolating a group of villages by barricades to prevent infiltration.

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rivers. They worship the God of Sun—Moon (Doni Pallo) as the Supreme being.

I flew to Walong and made a precarious landing. (Little did I know that I would be here again about two years later under adverse circumstances.) On arrival, I was presented with a scarf by the locals, as is customary in NEFA. From there I went to Digboi, Tuting and Machuka. At Along, I met the delightful political officer, Haldipur, who had our 'otter' refuelled with much ingenuity. As there were no proper arrangements available for this operation and we were in a hurry, he and his efficient Deputy, d'Silva, employed all means at their disposal to improvise. I saw them setting an example to their men by working with them, lifting heavy loads and inhaling fuel from barrels and exhaling it into our tank. As the sun sets early in this part of the world and it was already late in the afternoon, our pilot, Flt Lt Jagjit Singh, suggested that we should continue our journey to Zero the next day. But owing to my anxiety to stick to our schedule, I insisted that we carried on the same afternoon. When we took off, the pilot found that he was flying towards the sun, which blinded his vision. As the maps he carried were inaccurate, he thought shortly afterwards that he had lost his way. Whilst he tried to spot our destination visually and went from one land-mark to the other, he found that the sun had set. We all knew that if we did not find Zero and tried to land after it was pitch dark, we were bound to crash like a blind bat. There was not enough time nor fuel to allow us to go back to Along. So we kept groping in semi-darkness till we suddenly spotted a flat piece of land amidst thick jungle. Crossing our fingers, we landed and of all places, it turned out to be Zero. The pilot had done some skilful and courageous flying.

Before I describe my trip to Maja near Long-ju, I must relate how we established the post at Long-ju

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earlier that year and how we fell back to Maja.

We had sent a small military detachment of Assam Rifles under the command of Captain Adhikari and asked him to establish a post at Long-ju which was our own territory but which the Chinese claimed as theirs. A political officer told me at Daporijo that before Adhikari went to Long-ju, he was given a red coat, to be conferred upon a venerable villager who should be appointed as Gaon Bara (Village Headman), as symbol of our authority in Long-ju. Jamedar Limbu who met me at Jorhat (and who had been present at the Long-ju battle earlier) told me that Captain Adhikari on reaching Long-ju appointed a Gaon Bara there and decorated him with a red coat as instructed. He then sent out a patrol to reconnoitre the surrounding terrain in its close vicinity. When the Chinese heard that we had appointed a Gaon Bara at Long-ju and when one of their patrols from Migyithun, a village near Long-ju saw ours, they grew suspicious without any justification. They accordingly intensified their patrol activity in the vicinity of Long-ju, and seeing them do so, we did the same. Then, suddenly, the Chinese attacked our post at Long-ju and overwhelmed it. This was August 1959.

When Adhikari was evacuated due to what he complained was appendicitis, Captain Mitra was sent to recapture Long-ju which, without adequate resources, was a tall order. This gallant officer, however, established our post at Maja, instead, about six miles South of Long-ju (and about three miles or less as the crow flies).

I flew from Zero to Daporijo and thence to Lime-King in a helicopter. This trip was far from hazardous contrary to what I had heard earlier. Lime-King lay between two high ranges and was situated above the banks of river Subansiri. It was an isolated spot, miles away from anywhere.

There was no other mode of travel possible beyond

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this point except on one's flat feet. All our porters were Thagins, as was my guide Tayo. They were slit-eyed, simple, honest and cheerful. In their belief, they were Godless and superstitious, worshipping witch-doctors, never killing snakes and never curing a snake-bite. Tayo was handsome, tough, agile and sure-footed. He spoke good Hindustani and had the topography of NEFA on his finger tips. He kept up a fast pace over difficult terrain. He could not understand why those from the plains made heavy weather whilst climbing mountains, which to him was a piece of cake.

After a short break at Lime-King, I left in the afternoon on this treacherous trek, along with Brigadier Guraya and Captain Mitra, two excellent companions. No senior officer had tried the trek to the vicinity of Long-ju so far. We went down a narrow track to the suspension bridge along the river which was decked with split logs. After three hours of strenuous marching, and going through thick jungles, we reached the first stage soon after dark. Our muscles ached and our throats were parched with thirst. After a restful night we continued the next morning and found the going even more trying. Going over a dry river bed full of loose stones and skirting around big boulders was a tiresome business. The jungle here got fairly thick, with considerable undergrowth. The route had many stiff climbs and descents and was studded with ladder climbs over sheer rock. Going up on these ladders, many of which were hanging loosely by constant use and appeared on their last legs, was a dangerous affair. In fact, a porter carrying our wireless-set slipped from one of these and fell down about fifty feet on the only stretch of sand along the river bank below. He was lucky to have escaped with a few minor scratches. In many places the track petered out and we had to hug the mountain-face, holding on to creepers with our toes, shrubs and roots as our only supports.

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When we first went over the suspension bridges, which one came across frequently in NEFA, we felt scared as they were made of bamboo and seemed to swing us off our feet but after crossing a few we got a hang of how to negotiate them. Going over slippery log bridges was always a tricky affair. Tree trunks had been thrown across two ridges or water obstacles as improvised bridges and apart from being insecure in structure, they gave one the creeps each time one looked down into the yawning spaces below. One slip and it was good-bye to life. I tripped more than once because I was unable to keep my balance like an acrobat whilst going across them but my guide either put his hand as my foot-rest or caught hold of my leg or arm just before I slipped to what could be sure death. We came across some pretty rough country and saw river Tsarichu from Tibet meeting the Subansiri on the way.

Our daily routine was to get up at five in the morning, and after a cup of tea to set off at about six. We marched for about two and half hours and then halted for breakfast. Our cooks prepared our lunch at the same time which we carried in our haversacks and off we went again, toiling hard for another three hours or so. After about an hour's halt for lunch, we resumed our journey once more. We heaved a big sigh of relief each time we sighted our camp at the end of the day's gruelling march. We halted for the night well before sun-set which was about 4.30 in the afternoon. Our porters cut bamboo trees and shrub and covering it with tarpaulins prepared our shelters. Our beds were made over dry grass and we had our dinner by about seven. We then gave out orders for the next day, had a brief session of gossip and put out our kerosene lamps. The noise of the river in spate kept me awake most of the night. I employed various means such as putting cotton wool in my ears and managed to have a few stretches of sleep. As we drew nearer the snowline, each night grew

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colder.

The whole of the area covered by this journey was full of leeches, wasps, bees and snakes. Ever so often leeches got stuck to a portion of our body and sucked much of our blood before we removed them with salt or a match stick. Both act on them like poison. We had many narrow escapes from snakes hanging perilously from trees and bushes. The whole day we encountered varied noises of hissing jungle birds and came across a variety of game including wild bear which the Thagins with us killed with a ferocious glint in their eyes. We passed through many dense forests on the way.

We used to report our location each evening by wireless to higher military headquarters. I once had a bet of one rupee with Brigadier Guraya, that if we went off the air for even as long as forty-eight hours at a stretch, the higher-ups in the Army would not even notice our ominous silence, let alone try to find out what had gone amiss with us. Guraya could hardly believe my contention as he said surely people would show greater concern for us. We then went dead on our wireless for forty-eight hours and sure enough no one turned a hair!

Each day, when I went across suspension bridges which dangled dangerously, precarious log bridges or climbed slanting paths, crawling at times on all fours, with a thumping heart (when it seemed that our 'inside was coming outside') we went up and then came down, only to go up again. It was like a game of snakes and ladders. My head, legs and feet ached and I panted for breath. I swore I would never undertake this sort of ordeal again (how often had I pledged this and yet I repeatedly undertook such treks and went up these gruelling heights). Not one of my colleagues, some of whom were supposedly such 'good' soldiers, had ever attempted such trips.

Life had little excitement during these journeys. There were no newspapers, no letters, no phones, no

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meetings, no complicated problems. Many big things looked small and ridiculous in these settings and many small things like ropes, sticks and water seemed big. Food of any sort seemed delicious. I was often haunted by various memories in the stillness of nights.

We had no doctor with us and so the few medicines we carried seemed to be the cure of all diseases.

In hazardous circumstances it was our ego which kept us going. We knew our men were watching us and so in trying to set an example, we kept a straight face, even though our heart might have been sinking and bore the burden bravely.

Going over some very difficult country, we reached Maja on the fourth day at about 1 p.m. It was located in a bowl, with high mountains all round. The main party was camped along the river as was its commanding officer. He was physically indifferent and did not know much of what was happening around him. I found he had been sending situation reports from here to higher authorities which were not entirely accurate and which must have been misleading. No one could check the veracity of what he said as no one of any importance had ever visited Maja so far. At least, that is what he thought. He also did not have very sober habits.

Supplies and mails were dropped at Maja by air only during fair weather which was rare. Life for our men here was quite a trial. They only complained, however, after I asked them repeatedly, that some of them had had no leave for a long stretch and, in one or two cases, their arrears of pay had not been settled. I pulled out some money I had on me and settled their dues. I also ordered that the two men who should have had leave would go home without delay (along with me the next day). These two steps had an immediate effect on their morale.

After a short rest on reaching Maja, I went up to a vantage point from where I saw the surrounding country.

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Long-ju cannot be seen from Maja as it is concealed behind a ridge. I understood the Chinese had built a motorable road up to quite near this garrison. Migyithun which the Thagins call Holu, was quite near Long-ju from where the next five stages are Chickchar, Tomze, Sula, Lado and Namdzong.

I had the Commanding Officer of this detachment immediately transferred from this place as I feared the responsibility he bore here was beyond him.

After a fruitful trip, and putting up an inscription on the trunk of a tree, commemorating our visit to Maja on 11 November, 1959, I returned to Lime-King and Missamari. Due to shortage of time, I went on my first trip to Bomdila by night and had to walk up the last and mountainous lap of the journey for several miles in the small hours of the morning as torrential rains and a land-slide had blocked the road for all vehicular traffic. I then flew back to Delhi via Shillong,[19] the capital of Assam, and reported what I had seen in Nagaland and NEFA to Thimayya and Nehru. This trip had taken me nearly three weeks.

Field Marshal Montgomery visited Delhi in January 1960. In his talk to all officers of the Delhi Garrison, he said, among many entertaining things: 'I am hoping to visit China soon and have written to Mao about it. I have told him to let me have a reply by Friday,' (as if Mao was one of his subordinate commanders!) He also said politics succeeded by votes and soldiering by success and that if he was judged by votes, he would have been out long ago.

General Mohammad Musa, Pakistan's C-in-C, was invited by the Indian Army to the Annual Horse Show at Delhi in March 1960. As I have already stated, he was a Major on my staff when I was a Lt Colonel in 1946-47.

19 I had also been to Cherrapunji earlier, which is known as the wettest place in the world, with an average yearly rainfall of 426 inches.

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Time had marched on since then and our mutual positions had been reversed. He now held a General's rank, whereas I was one step behind him. After having had a meal with him to which he invited me, on the day of his arrival, he asked me over to his room where we had a long and interesting talk. We were as friendly as ever and delighted to be in each other's company once again. Whilst our personal relations remained cordial and without any rancour, it was ironical that our respective countries were far from being friendly. We both agreed that if the present generation of Indians and Pakistanis, many of whom knew each other well, having lived closely together in the past, were unable to come to some friendly terms, it would be well-nigh impossible to do so after our life time by future generations in both the countries as they would not have the advantage of knowing each other so well. Moreover, the fact that problems like Kashmir might remain unsolved would only accentuate our bitterness with the passage of time. Unfortunately, the trouble between Pakistan and India was political and beyond mere soldiers. We then talked of the good old days when we had served together.

When I told Nehru about Musa's presence among us, he met him cordially and invited him and his two sons[20] to breakfast at his house the next morning.

My office was not very far from that of Nehru's. One morning when I was parking my car, I saw a young man of about twenty standing near Nehru's car opposite his office. He was ill-clad and wore no shoes. I walked up to him, out of curiosity, and asked him what he wanted. He said he lived in a village in Bengal. His mother had gone mad and his sister was an invalid. His father had died many years ago. He was poor and without anyone to help them. Someone had told him that if he approached

20 President Ayub Khan's son who was with Musa was also invited.

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Nehru, the latter would solve all his problems. He had travelled from Bengal to Delhi by train, without ticket, and had not had a square meal for quite some time. I found his feet were bleeding due to exposure and some disease. He said even though he had come all the way to see Nehru, no one allowed him to do so. Hundreds had seen him in this plight, but not one had bothered to stop and ask him what his trouble was. I was moved by the simplicity of this man wanting to see the Prime Minister of a country for his personal problems which, however big from his point of view, seemed minor in the capital of India. I brought him to my office, had his bleeding feet bandaged and let him have a hearty meal. Then I explained to him that Nehru was a very busy man and hence unable to see the thousands who sought interviews with him every day. In order that this unfortunate man should not be disheartened, I then told him that I would see Nehru on his behalf. After a while I gave him two hundred rupees, ostensibly from Nehru (whom I was supposed to have seen in the meantime) for the treatment of his mother and sister. This pleased him no end and he said his trip to Delhi had, after all, been worth his while! I did not want to send him back to Bengal with what I thought was only a small sum of money which was not going to last him long, without doing something substantial for him. I therefore got him admitted to a place where he was taught how to make cheap foot-wear, a trade which would give him a living in his village.

I was going to office after lunch when a pedestrian tumbled down in front of my car and lay unconscious. When he came round, I asked him who he was and what the matter was with him. He told me he was a refugee from Punjab and sold fruits in Paharganj. He had contracted tuberculosis and had to liquidate his shop in order to bear the medical expenses of his treatment. In fact, he had become so destitute now that he was unable to afford

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a shelter and billeted by the side of his old shop and near a dirty drain. He constantly went without meals which he could not afford and had not had enough to eat during the last few days. He, therefore, felt giddy and had fainted near my car. He showed me a packet of letters he had written to various authorities for some sort of aid but in vain. I brought him to my house, gave him a blanket, some warm clothes and asked him to stay with me. I approached many friends and collected large contributions for this unfortunate man. After six months of medication and care, he recovered his normal health. I was anxious to rehabilitate him, and, if possible, to buy back the shop which he had to sell not long ago. When, however, I attempted a deal with its new owner, he refused to play. I had, therefore, no choice but to persuade him through the aid of a police official, to sell it back to its original owner, though at a decent profit. Thus, my chance friend recovered his old pedestal and had another lease of life.

I heard from Brigadier M. M. Badshah in 1960 that an Anglo-Indian officer, Lt Col Prince, had been killed in a jeep accident, leaving behind a widow and two (?) children. As misfortunes never come alone, Mrs. Prince found herself in financial straits, without adequate accommodation and with a crippled child. I gave her what little money I could—as a token of sympathy—towards the alleviation of her distress and solved some of her other problems.

Dr. B. C. Roy brooked no interference in governing Bengal and administered his province like a benevolent dictator. People looked up to him as they knew he loved Bengal and also because he had been once Gandhi's physician. Krishna Menon wanted some land in Calcutta and elsewhere in Bengal for the purpose of erecting houses for Servicemen. B. C. Roy had not agreed. Menon and I who had gone to Calcutta for these discussions

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returned to Delhi crest-fallen. Menon sent me back to Calcutta shortly afterwards to persuade B. C. Roy, if possible. When I confronted the latter, he asked me to give him one good reason why he should give land to anyone else when Bengal needed it herself so acutely. I could not think of any serious answer which would satisfy him and so replied, light-heartedly:

'There are two reasons why you should give us this land. Firstly, in honour of your birthday, which fell yesterday, when you must give something away; and, secondly, in celebration of Bharat Ratna, the highest national award conferred upon you the other day.'

B. C. Roy was tickled at this frivolous logic and after some further discussion, he seemed satisfied and conceded most of the points on which he had refused to budge earlier.

The army wanted to build a cantonment in Chandigarh. Both Kairon and Menon were equally anxious that this should be done. Kairon thought this would improve the economy of Punjab's capital, and in Menon's view, it was psychologically important that Punjab's capital should have a cantonment. Menon was anxious that this project should commence without delay. As Quartermaster General, it was my job to do so.

The Punjab Government's estimate for the cost of land was Rs. 70,00,000. When I referred this case informally to the Finance Ministry, I was told that they could spare only Rs. forty lakhs for this land. I flew to Chandigarh and told Kairon, whom I had known for years, that unless he had the cost of land reduced by thirty lakhs, our proposal was not likely to get financial sanction due to insufficient funds available for this purpose. Kairon at once came to grips with the problem. Being asked to have the cost of this land reduced to almost half of its original estimate, was a bit thick. All the same, jumping all hurdles of red-tape, he called the owners of the land and

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the officials concerned and gave them a few hours to reconsider this estimate. When they appeared hesitant, I do not know what he told them but before the end of the day, the estimate was reduced by all concerned by about Rs. thirty lakhs. I don't know of many other people in India who could have brought this sort of thing off within a few hours.

Principal Staff Officers[21] at Army Headquarters held the rank of Lt General and drew a salary of Rs. 4,000 per month before 1947. After partition when the Indians took over from the British, in view of their comparatively short service and experience, the PSOs appointments were downgraded and were held by Major Generals. Twelve years later, when we had gained more experience, on our representation, these appointments were upgraded to the rank of Lt General once again. But their salary, instead of Rs. 4,000 per month was fixed at Rs. 3,500. This seemed inappropriate and arbitrary as none of our counterparts in other services were treated similarly. Thimayya had tried to have this matter rectified. Menon and Nehru agreed, but Morarji Desai, the Finance Minister, refused to play. His argument was that in the days of austerity, which prevailed, no high salaries should go up higher. Actually, it was a case of restoration of a salary and not that of an increase. When the matter reached a deadlock, I was asked by some of my colleagues to bring it to Nehru's notice informally. When I did so, with Thimayya's knowledge and permission, Nehru said that as it would have to be officially decided by the Defence Committee of the Cabinet (DCC), he was anxious to get the prior agreement of Pandit Pant and Morarji Desai. He therefore asked me to see both on his behalf. When I saw Pant and explained to him the case, he agreed. When, however, I

21 The appointments of the Chief of the General Staff, Adjutant General, Quartermaster General and Master General of Ordnance at Army HQ were known as the Principal Staff Officers (PSOs).

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went to Morarji Desai, after Nehru had rung him up that he was sending me to him, he told me he had gone into this case before and was not prepared to agree to the restoration of salary to the PSOs. I was present when this point came up for discussion before the DCC. When Nehru said he agreed, other ministers did the same in a chorus, including Morarji Desai. I never discovered why the latter had changed his mind.

During the hot weather, all Additional Secretaries and above in the Civil Secretariat were entitled to have their offices air-conditioned. Lt Generals, who ranked, in order of precedence, just above Additional Secretaries, were, however, not being given this privilege. We in the Army felt strongly about it but had not been able to get any change in this practice. I was asked by some of my colleagues if I could take up the matter personally as other efforts had failed. After much ado, I obtained Government sanction for air-conditioning units in PSOs offices. Krishna Menon then wrote the following note on this file: 'I hope some PSOs (dig at me!) will now keep cooler heads and others (dig at some others) will not get cold feet.'

After these cases went through, there was a whispering campaign that I had undue influence in various high quarters. This happened again and again. First, I would be asked by my colleagues or superiors to get a particular thing done (at a higher level than themselves) which they were unable to push through on their own. When I, on the other hand, happened to pull it off, in the interests of the service, they would allege that I had political influence.

The Army were building roads essential for the defence of India for some years. They were, however, lagging behind in their schedules because of financial hurdles, cumbersome procedures, lack of machinery and equip-

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ment and inadequate supervisory staff. Few in the country realized the urgency of the strategic roads. To Government, they seemed just another set of roads.

By 1960, the Chinese intrusions into our territory had increased. Government began taking things a little more seriously and, in the process, came into being the Border Roads Development Board, under the Chairmanship of Nehru. Its Deputy Chairman was Menon and its members included the Cabinet, Defence, Foreign and Transport Secretaries, the Army and the Air Chiefs and its Secretary, the affable and competent S.K. Mukerjee. Maj Gen K.N. Dubey, the trustworthy army engineer was its Director-General. I was nominated, in my personal capacity, to coordinate the activities of this Board. This organization had been formed to accelerate procedures and to expedite the task of building roads in every possible way.

Its first meeting was held on about 29 March 1960 at Nehru's residence. He stated at the outset that speed was the essence of our problem and that it was necessary to lay down priorities of work so that essential roads could commence forthwith. He considered Ladakh and NEFA deserved our attention most. It was agreed to plan these roads carefully, procure the necessary equipment, labour force, material, and the supervisory staff at the earliest. Also, that road development on the borders of different States should be co-ordinated by the Board. Nehru stated that even if the situation which now prevailed on our borders improved later, our road requirements along our frontier would remain a permanent commitment.

Maj Gen Dubey and I estimated that it would take two to three years (as against the experts estimates of five years) and cost approximately Rs. 200 crores to construct new essential roads and repair old ones covering about 4,000 miles. On a rough calculation, their cost was expected to be Rs. 4 lakhs per mile. This proposal was sanctioned

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in toto.

Recruiting of skilled and unskilled labour in the requisite numbers expeditiously became a problem because the border areas were thinly populated. Procuring men in harvesting periods was difficult. Finding them in the plains would not solve our problem as such men could not stand the rigours of heights. These were delaying factors. Roads had to be constructed at high altitudes, where blasting, construction of retaining walls, culverts, bridges and cause-ways were extremely difficult. Work was slowed down during limited working seasons due to snow and rain. Machines had to be imported. We had to arrange for the purchase of the requisite number of tractors, compressors, motor graders, portable rock drills, snow-clearing and bridging equipment, explosives, vehicles and had also to establish mobile workshops. Foreign exchange was short. Recruiting of supervisory staff was not easy as there was already a grave shortage of this category both in the Civil and the Army. Not everyone displayed a sense of urgency. Red tape stood in our way. Despite these difficulties, construction of these roads went ahead. Much propaganda against them also went on. Few knew what was really happening, what difficulties were in our way and how they were being surmounted.[22]

Roads all along our 2,500 miles border, in difficult mountainous terrain, including the one from Dirong Dzong to Tse La and Towang in NEFA and to Kargil and Leh via Zoji La in Kashmir were improved from a jeep track to a route fit for heavy lorries. Alignment of many of these roads had to be changed, which was a major operation.

I had frequent occasions of discussing the various

22 After breathless adventures and display of great technical skill, the engineers made commendable progress with these roads which, however, were far from complete when the Chinese attacked India in October 1962 as their construction had started in right earnest only in 1961.

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aspects of the Border Roads with Nehru, specially in cases where co-ordination had to be done with the Chief Ministers of States and various Ministries of the Central Government. I found Nehru sympathetic though not always strong. I dealt with Pant also many times and always found him extremely helpful.

Pant was an astute administrator who had rendered outstanding services to India in his day. He was generally tactful but could, when necessary, be extremely firm. If, however, he wished to evade an issue, he had evolved a plausible technique to do so. He had a sharp intellect and was a shrewd judge of men. Nehru relied a great deal on him.

(Pant died on 6 March 1961. In him India lost an able administrator whose knowledge of political affairs was second to none. He was almost the last of the old guards, in whose death Nehru lost a staunch supporter. Pant was an old comrade whom Nehru took into confidence in many delicate matters and who was source of great strength to him. His death left Nehru a solitary figure in a political camp in which hostility against him was growing up steadily.)

Krishna Menon had given orders to the Border Roads Organization that although they had acute shortage of vehicles, they were not to buy Mercedes Benz lorries, to make up their deficiencies which were to be met only by either Japanese vehicles or those manufactured indigenously. The two latter types were not available at once but new Mercedes-Benz vehicles could be purchased from the J and K Government who had some to spare. These, however, were taboo under Krishna Menon's orders. In the meantime, the construction and repair of the road Sonamarg-Leh was held up, due to shortage of vehicles. As this situation was incongruous, the J and K Government suggested to me in 1961 that we should buy from them a few Mercedes-Benz vehicles and expedite

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the construction of the Sonamarg-Leh road. Because there seemed much sense in this offer, I disregarded Krishna Menon's orders on the subject and instructed the Director-General of Border Roads to purchase a few Mercedes Benz lorries which the Kashmir Government could make available to us. In a dinner party[23] in Srinagar two days later I heard that the news of this action on my part had already leaked out to the Defence Minister.

When Krishna Menon asked me later why I had disobeyed his order, I told him that there seemed to be no good reason apparent to me why the excellent Mercedes Benz or any good lorries which were available, should not be bought, when the construction of one of our vital frontier roads was held up due to their shortage.

Bhutan occupies an area of about 18,000 square miles with a population of 6,00,000. It is a thinly populated land-locked and independent State located between India and Tibet and is ruled by a king with its capital at Paro (or Thimpu). About 25 per cent of the people are of Nepalese origin. It is crossed by three rivers: Raidak, Sankosh and Manas. A line of mountains runs through it, rising from about 5,000 feet at the Indian border to the great peak of Jula Kangri which is over 24,000 feet. It is covered with dense jungle and experiences heavy rainfall.

The Bhutanese are simple and sensitive people and their leaders appear assertive in their attitude with us occasionally lest we become domineering in our mutual relations.

Bhutan signed a treaty with us in 1949 according to which she re-affirmed her position which existed prior

23 During parties in Kashmir I found that though no drinks were served publicly, in deference to India's policy of prohibition, there was always a bar tucked away somewhere within the building from which 'code' messages kept pouring in for important guests sometimes over-heard by others that there was a 'trunk call' for them on which excuse they slipped away and came back after a quick drink.

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to 1947, whereby the Government at Delhi would only control its external affairs.

The total revenue of Bhutan in 1961 was Rs. 30 lakhs which included a large sum for the maintenance of its Ruler and its monasteries. With this small revenue, seeking foreign aid became inescapable for her.

Nehru had emphasized that we should take care not to get involved in the internal squabbles of Bhutan (which he thought, in turn, might encourage China or other foreign influences within its territory).

The Ruler of Bhutan, accompanied by his Prime Minister, Jigmie Dorji, came to Delhi in February, 1961 and sought India's aid (running into several crores of rupees) for the development of their country. After they discussed this matter broadly with Nehru, Jigmie Dorji went to discuss it with Menon. Before this meeting, I happened to see Nehru who told me how important it was from India's point of view to strengthen Bhutan's friendship in view of her key position on our border and how we must do everything possible to help her. He also said we must treat smaller countries like Bhutan as our equals and never give them an impression that they were being 'civilized' by us. Jigmie said in the meeting with Menon in which Maj Gen K. N. Dubey was also present, that apart from re-organizing Bhutan's defences, we could assist them in developing their communications. He asked how soon the Border Roads Organization could make a road from the Indian border to Tashi Gong Dzong in Eastern Bhutan. When I forecast—after consulting Dubey—an estimate of two years in which we could complete this road, Jigmie said he took it with a pinch of salt and added sarcastically that he had had 'such' estimates from other Indian officials before and that he took a bet it was an impossible target. I took this as an affront to my country and snapped: 'Perhaps you may like to approach someone else for more reliable forecasts...' There was pin-

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drop silence after this outburst.[24] I had perhaps dropped a brick but was not going to let this sort of dig against my country go unchallenged.

'When can you start your preliminary reconnaissance of Eastern Bhutan for the purpose of building these roads?' Jigmie asked.

'Tomorrow', I replied.

'Not tomorrow, for Heaven's sake!' said Jigmie. 'We can't inform all concerned to receive you so soon.'

'I thought you were in a hurry,' I rejoined.

A few days later, I flew from Delhi to Gauhati from where I took an 'Otter' and made a maiden and 'improvised' landing on a football field at Darranga on the Indo-Bhutanese border at 3 p.m. The Bhutanese Commissioner knew nothing of my arrival perhaps because telegrams in Bhutan between some areas in those days travelled through postmen on foot. (But we told him of his Prime Minister's verbal approval.) Owing to the urgency of the task, I continued my journey from the emergency airstrip, where I had landed, within half an hour of my arrival. Wading through several nullahs, Maj Gen Dubey and I trekked into Bhutan, without any official permit, marching over hills till a late hour at night. After examining the various aspects of road construction and discussing other technical matters on the spot, I and General Dubey returned to Delhi.

We then undertook this task with a great sense of urgency. It was heartening to see that the Bhutanese Government took it as a matter of national pride that their

24 Once we started progressing with the construction of this road, Jigmie became very friendly both with me and Dubey. We began enjoying so much of his confidence that he went to the extent of asking us to draft some of the letters he wanted to send to our Foreign Office on this subject. Appa Pant, our enthusiastic and capable Political Agent, played a significant role in the forging of this bond. Jigmie met both Dubey and me whenever he could find a suitable opportunity, exchanging presents and extending hospitality.

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road development project should be accomplished enthusiastically and expeditiously. They organized the labour and installed enthusiasm among the working people for what they were doing.[25]

(I remained in close touch with Jigmie Dorji during the period 1961–62, and found him congenial and progressive but conventional; he seemed always sceptical of his own position[26] in Bhutan. He often said that India and his country were bound to keep coming closer steadily in spite of the Chinese machinations.)

I found dealing with and coordinating the activities of the Border Roads Organization from Kashmir to NEFA, all along our border, a fascinating task.

Sikkim—Dres Mo Jong—the Valley of Rice—is a protectorate of India which is responsible for her external affairs, defence and communications under the Treaty of 1949. It has a population of about 150,000, two-thirds of which is of Napalese origin and an area of less than 3,000 square miles. The inhabitants of Sikkim, mostly Buddhists, are lovable people. Its main communities are the Lepchas, the Bhutias who have migrated from Tibet and the Napalese. Its capital is Gangtok. It has often been invaded in the past by Nepal and Bhutan between which this small country lies sandwiched. It has traditionally been an intermediary economically between India and Tibet.

The present Maharaja, Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal, a Lepcha, ascended his throne after a colourful Ser-thringa-Sol coronation ceremony, on 4 April 1965, on the third day of the second month of the year of Wood Serpent, according to the Sikkimese Calendar. He is an intelligent and enlightened ruler who is afraid of the Nepa-

25 The roads went according to schedule till 1962 and progressed satisfactorily thereafter.

26 He was murdered in Bhutan by a compatriot in 1964.

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lese majority in his land wiping out the Lepcha minority one day and is sensitive about maintaining Sikkim's identity as a separate State but realizes it is not possible to do so without our help and friendship. Nehru's view was that India, in her own interest, should befriend both the people and the Ruler of Sikkim and should do her best to develop it into a stable, prosperous and friendly State. Its defence is not only our treaty responsibility, but is also important to us. The Maharaja would, I suppose, with the passage of time, introduce gradual democratic reforms taking care that this process does not lead to instability and internal disruption.

Nehru was extremely fond of the people and the rulers of both Bhutan and Sikkim. He encouraged them through his personal contact to come closer to India. In the implementation of his policies, however, some over-enthusiastic representatives of India had, in the past, gone too far and hurt the susceptibilities of the Royal families of Bhutan and Sikkim.

China was wooing Bhutan and Sikkim in an effort to bring them under her own sphere of influence. It was, therefore, prudent for us to develop and maintain cordial relations with these States, and reassure them that we have no designs on their territory or way of life.

In 1960, I took permission from Thimayya and undertook a trip to the fascinating State of Sikkim. On the way I visited Darjeeling and from Tiger Hill saw the panorama of the massive Kanchenjunga and the distant Mount Everest. It was an unforgettable spectacle of incredible beauty. These sights seem obscure in the twilight before dawn, 'changing colours little by little and then suddenly catching fire at sun-rise.' It is something to be seen to be believed.

On my way to Gangtok, I had to spend a night on duty at Kalimpong, a beautiful hill station near Darjeeling. The local commander had arranged to put me up in Tashi

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Dorji's[27] house, a palatial building not far from the Cantonment. During the course of a conversation with me after dinner, she told me that Bhutan was located between two big countries, China and India, and was afraid of both. Admittedly, India had already given her some aid but the Bhutanese were skeptical. She seemed hostile towards India and asked me what I thought was good for her country: to remain isolated, undeveloped and free from foreign interference, or to accept aid from abroad and become civilized? I told her there was no doubt in my mind that her country should accept aid from abroad and apart from developing in various walks of life, should become civilized. As regards the country from whom she should accept such aid, while it was entirely a matter for Bhutan to decide, placed as she was geographically and having regard to her ideology, the obvious country from which such assistance should be sought was India, her neighbour. I finally said that Bhutan should have no misgivings in view of India's long standing friendship with her and the fact that Nehru had nothing but goodwill for her country. Whilst I was saying all this, I had a feeling I was talking to a person who heard me with mental reservations.

I reached Gangtok the next day where I called on the Ruler and his two daughters as also the Maharaj Kumar. I then left for the Kongra-La area in central Sikkim, where the Pass lies at an altitude of over 16,000 feet. I had brought my two daughters with me on this perilous trip so that they could gain a memorable experience. Brigadier Bhagwati Singh, commanding the brigade, and Lt Col Brar, commanding the Infantry Battalion which was responsible for this area, Major Amar Singh and Naik Prem Singh of the same unit, and lastly, the doctor, Captain Gandhi, were also in our party. The going was fairly good in the first

27 In February 1965, she fled from Bhutan to Kathmandu to join some other Bhutanese who had intrigued against their King and had sought political asylum in Nepal.

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three stages but as the mountains around us rose to higher altitudes, it grew bitterly cold.

Just before the final ascent, we had reached a camp which was about 15,600 feet high and had retired for the night in our tents, when we felt loss of breath and were unable to sleep. It was perhaps due to lack of acclimatization and so I thought we would soon get over it. But at about midnight, my two daughters, who had never been beyond an altitude of 9,000 feet, complained of severe headache and said they felt generally very ill. When I shouted for the doctor, Gandhi, who was in the next tent, he replied, almost in a whisper, that though he felt like nothing on earth himself, he would try to come as soon as he could. A few minutes later he staggered into our tent and found my daughters were suffering from acute mountain sickness.

As we had to leave for the final spurt up to about 16,500 feet the next morning—by when the girls were feeling only slightly better but still far from being well—I wondered if I should take them with me or leave them behind with an escort. After some thought, I felt I should let them take the decision themselves. To my pleasant surprise, they decided to come with us right up to Kongra-La. After a strenuous climb, we reached our destination about mid-day. As some adjoining peaks rose to well over 22,000 feet, we were frozen stiff with cold and having rested a little, we all rushed back to the camp below where we had spent the last night. The girls felt a sense of great exultation at achieving their goal and we all returned to base after an absence of nearly a fortnight.

Purr[28] is one of the several military outposts in Nagaland set up in the remote mountain fastnesses to aid the civil government in the maintenance of law and order in that strife-torn Indian territory. It was attacked by 500 in-

28 We had about ninety men in this post.

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dependence-seeking, well-armed, hostile Nagas in the small hours of 26 August 1960 after it had been effectively isolated by the simple device of destroying a wooden bridge which carried over a turbulent mountain stream the only mule track linking the outpost with the nearest district headquarters eight difficult miles away. For its normal requirements of food and ammunition, the outpost was almost entirely dependent upon air supply by a civilian air charter firm. The garrison's stock of ammunition had run down to a dangerously low level, owing to their injudicious use of it during the first few hours of exchange of fire with the hostiles. In their radio appeal for relief by ground forces, therefore, was included an urgent request for ammunition (and water) to be air-dropped. In the face of heavy hostile ground fire the civil aircraft could not be expected to operate; the task was, therefore, at once allotted to an air transport wing of the Indian Air Force, based in the Brahmaputra Valley and two such aircraft were despatched at first light one morning on this mission. One of them was shot during the final run-in by enemy small arms fire from the ground and had to force-land in a paddy field near River Tezu not far from Purr (where the members of its crew were captured by the Nagas soon after). The Captain of the other aircraft with firm belief that discretion was the better part of valour returned to base without completing the mission. Whilst the Air Force were doing this, the relief column sent by the army to this beleagured garrison being unable to effect a crossing, owing to a destroyed bridge, was held up at the river throughout 26 August and no further air-drops were attempted by the wing on that day. The relief column was thus delayed in reaching Purr. If the Nagas did not storm the outposts on 26 August, they either thought that they were the masters of the situation and could afford to bide their time or they were completely unaware of the weakness of the resistance our garrison could put up due to their various

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handicaps. Meanwhile, the A. O. C-in-C, Air Vice Marshal K.L. Sondhi's request for permission to mount air strikes against the hostile Nagas had not reached finality in Delhi, due to political considerations, and time was running out for the outnumbered garrison. Consequently, Sondhi left his Headquarters on the morning of 27th August for the Air base at Jorhat and flew in a special supply air dropping sortie to Purr, to set an example to his subordinate pilots and in doing so, while he was over that area, attracted hostile fire which narrowly missed his aircraft.

Delhi held a special conference presided over by Nehru to discuss ways and means of dealing with this situation and effecting the release of our captured aircrew. When Thimayya suggested that we should use guerilla tactics against the Nagas, Nehru flared up and said the army had been saying this for long but apart from lip service had taken no practical steps in the matter. He said we indulged in more talk than deed.

Both Menon and Nehru suggested I should go to Purr and bring back an eye-witness account, specially of the logistical situation. Accordingly, I flew from Delhi and landed at Dum Dum in foul weather. Air Commodore Malse who met me on arrival, flew me beyond that point in torrential rain, wrestling with our aircraft which was being tossed about like a match-box. As we gained height, we battled against turbulent clouds which surrounded us from all sides. Steering our Dakota through a storm became an exacting effort. This is how air operations in this area are constantly hampered by rain and cloud, specially at this time of the year. We nearly came to grief more than once but were saved by the skill and courage of Air Commodore Malse. Beyond Jorhat we flew in a helicopter in the hope of landing at Purr but as we neared this post we found it was covered with heavy cloud. When we were flying over Phek, a few miles from Purr, Maj Gen 'Dany' Misra, Commander of our forces in Nagaland, and at Phek himself at the time,

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suggested to us in a wireless message that we should not land there, which we were attempting to do, as he was expecting this post to be attacked by the enemy soon. All the same, I asked the pilot to land there which he did. This post was in the Chaksang area about thirty miles from Kohima.

Lt Gen Umrao Singh, who had just taken over as Commander of 33 Corps, and Misra, met me on arrival. I went immediately to an adjoining hill feature, a good vantage point, the route of which passed through tricky and hostile terrain, from where I had an excellent view of what lay around us. When I examined the defences of this post, I found its commander had sited them in an ad hoc and an unsatisfactory manner. He had not assessed his requirement of defence stores suitably, and had little idea of what his ammunition situation was. In fact whilst he had one of his mortars sited tactically on the ground, its ammunition lay thirty miles behind. After rectifying this situation, we got ready for the impending offensive which the hostiles might have mounted on us that night, presumably as a diversionary move from Purr, and allotted perimeters to everyone present there, including visitors. The attack, however, never came and I said goodbye to this post, the next day.

The Naga hostiles kept eluding us with their four captives whom they had captured from our battered Dakota including Flt Lt Singha, despite many operations which we mounted to retrieve them. They kept playing hide and seek with us and often crossed the Indo-Burma border which they were convinced we could not violate and where they thought they would be immune from our onslaughts. Getting frantic in our efforts to retrieve our airmen and tired of the Nagas' leap-frog tactics, we decided to give them a hot pursuit wherever they went, including the Burmese border which we crossed in order to deal with the hostile Nagas on getting clearance to do so.

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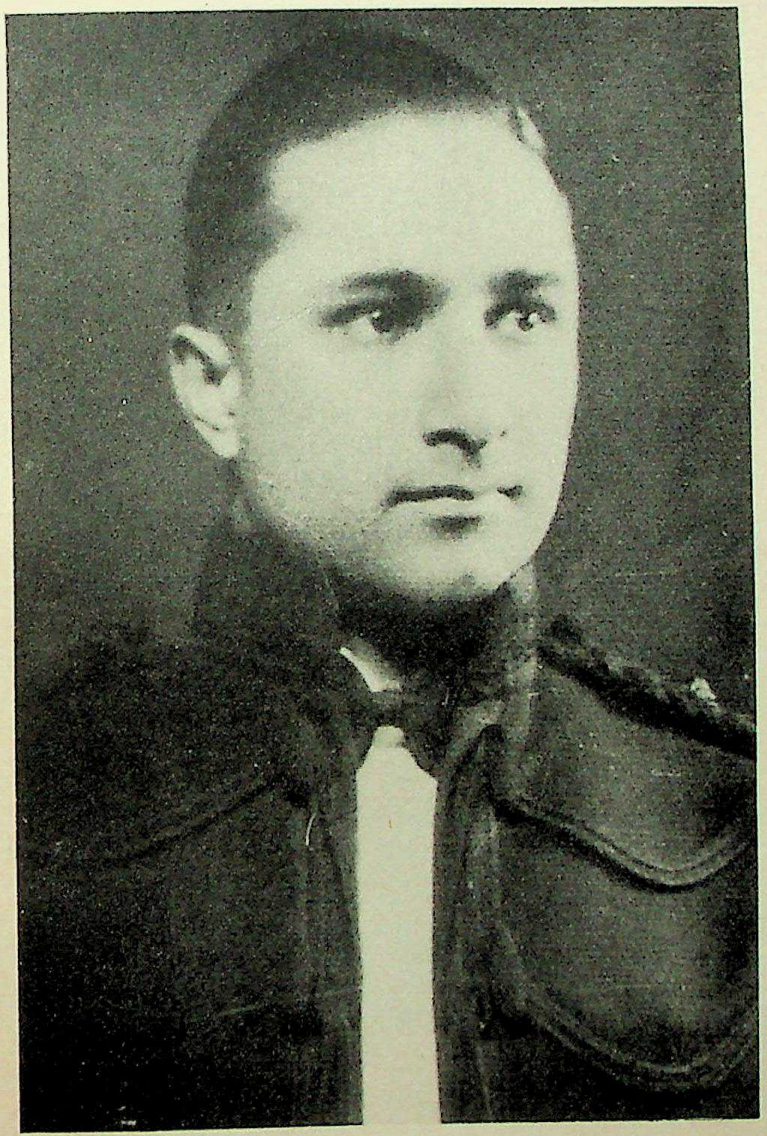

The Author as 2nd Lieut in the Rajputana Rifles in 1935

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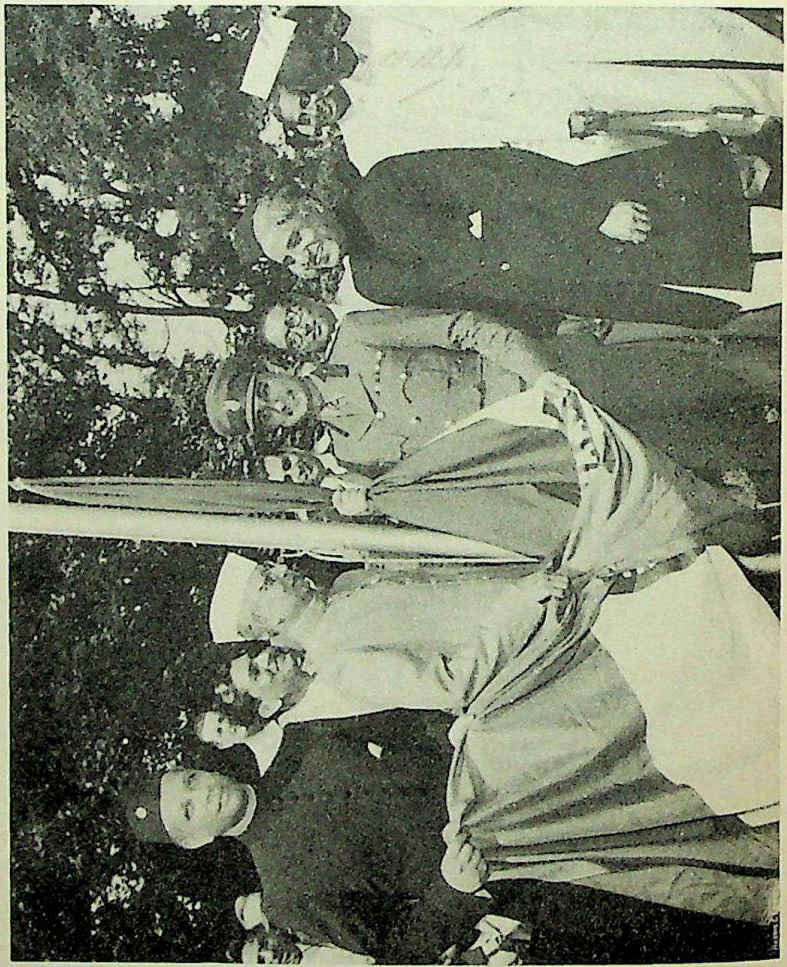

Our Ambassador and the Author at Washington on 15 August 1947

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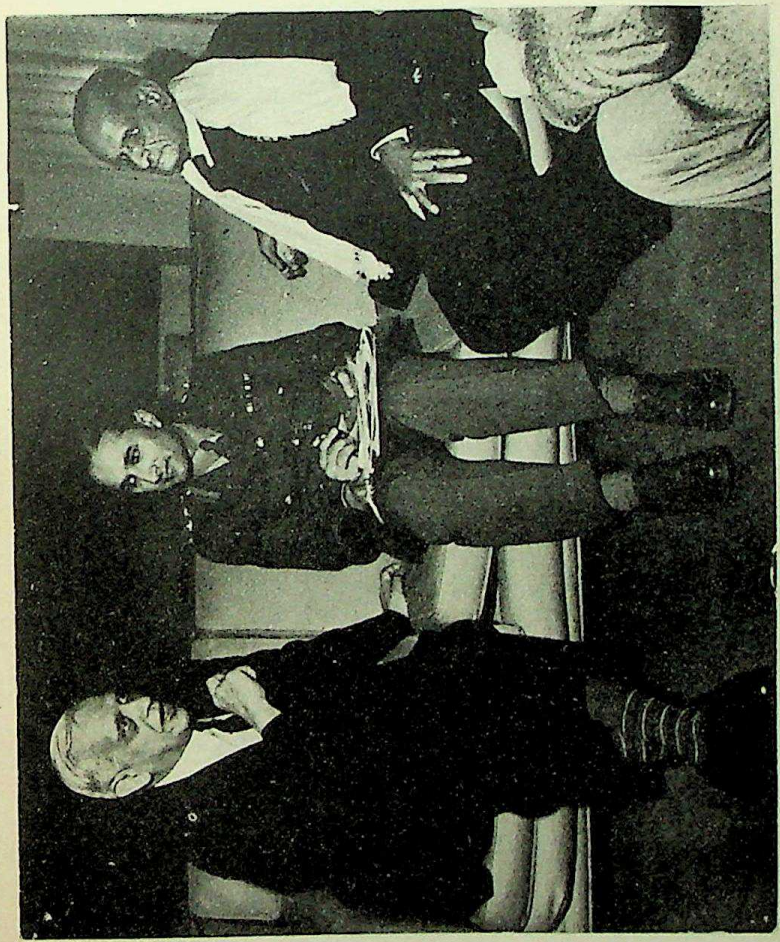
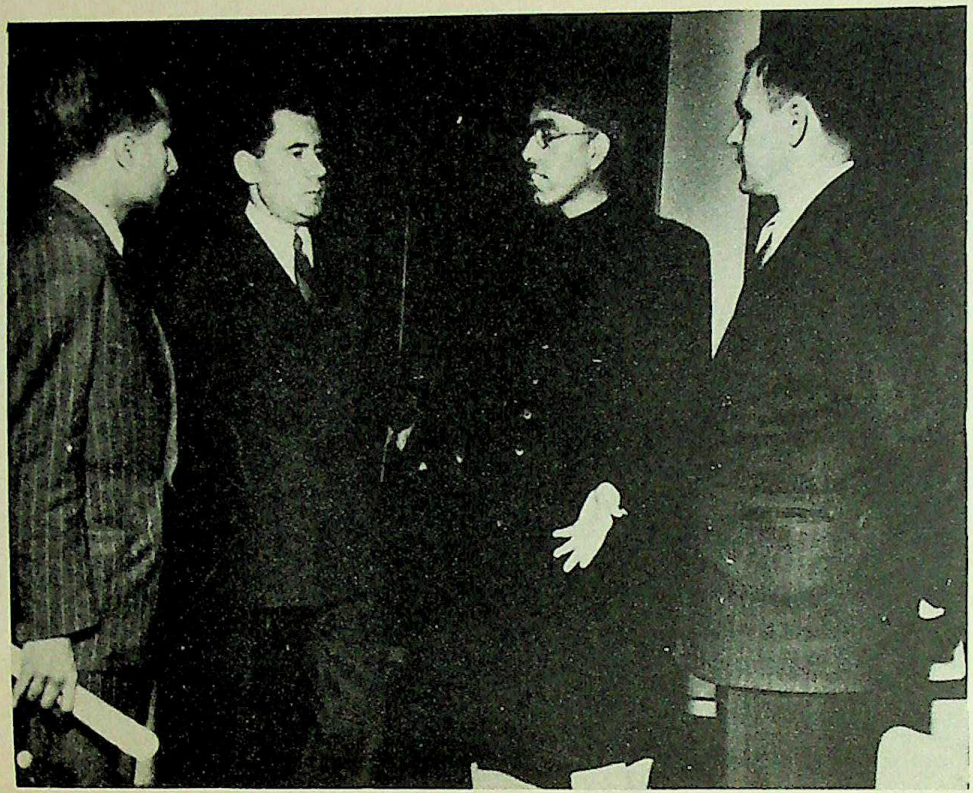


Sir N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, M.C. Setalvad and the author during the Kashmir case at the Security Council in 1948



Gromyko, Sheikh Abdulla and the author during the Kashmir cast at the Security Council in 1948

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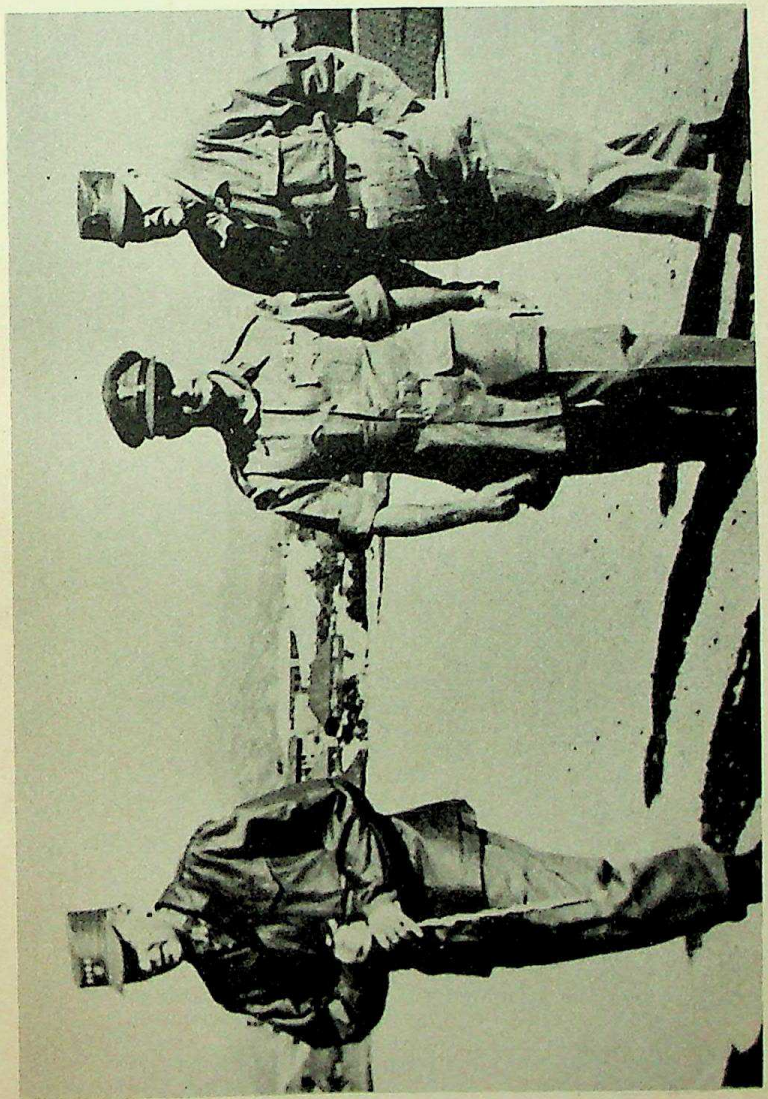

General Maxwell Taylor and the author in Korea in 1953

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The author on a rescue mission near the Rohtang Pass in 1955

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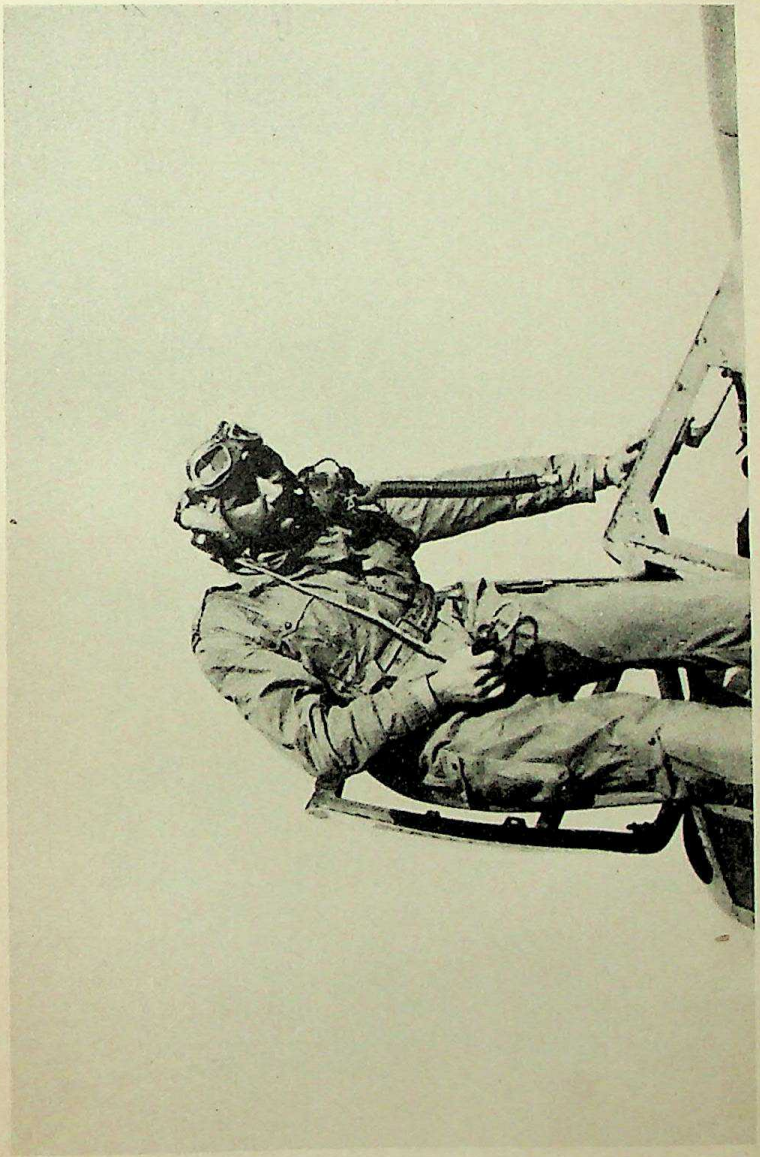

The author after a flight in a fighter plane in 1958

Right to left: Air Marshal Mukerji, the author and Sarin of the Ministry of Defence in 1959

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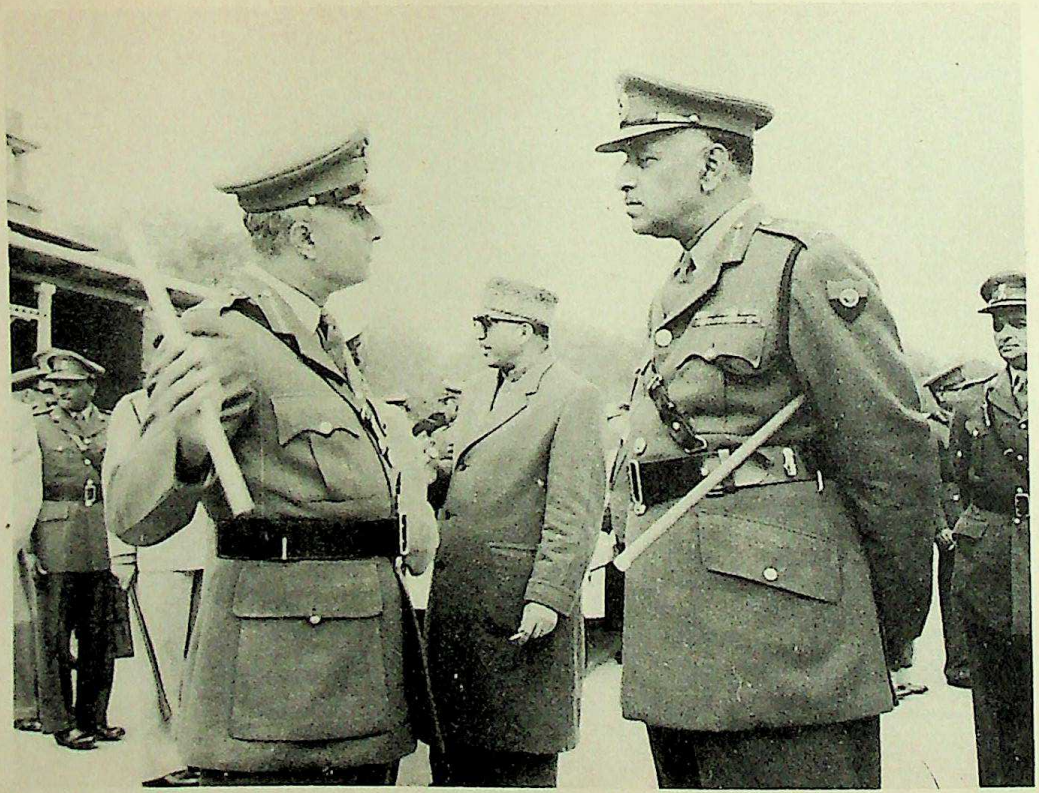

General K.S. Thimayya and the author in 1959 (with Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed in the background)

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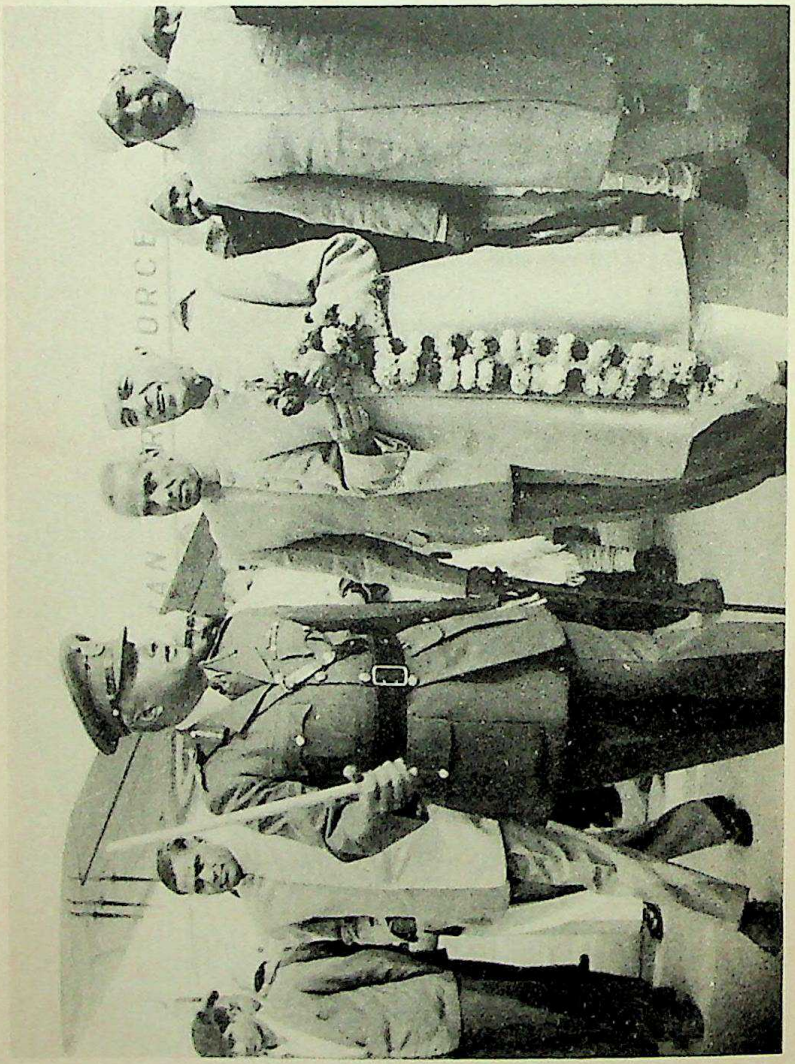

Pandit Nehru, Krishna Menon and the author in 1959

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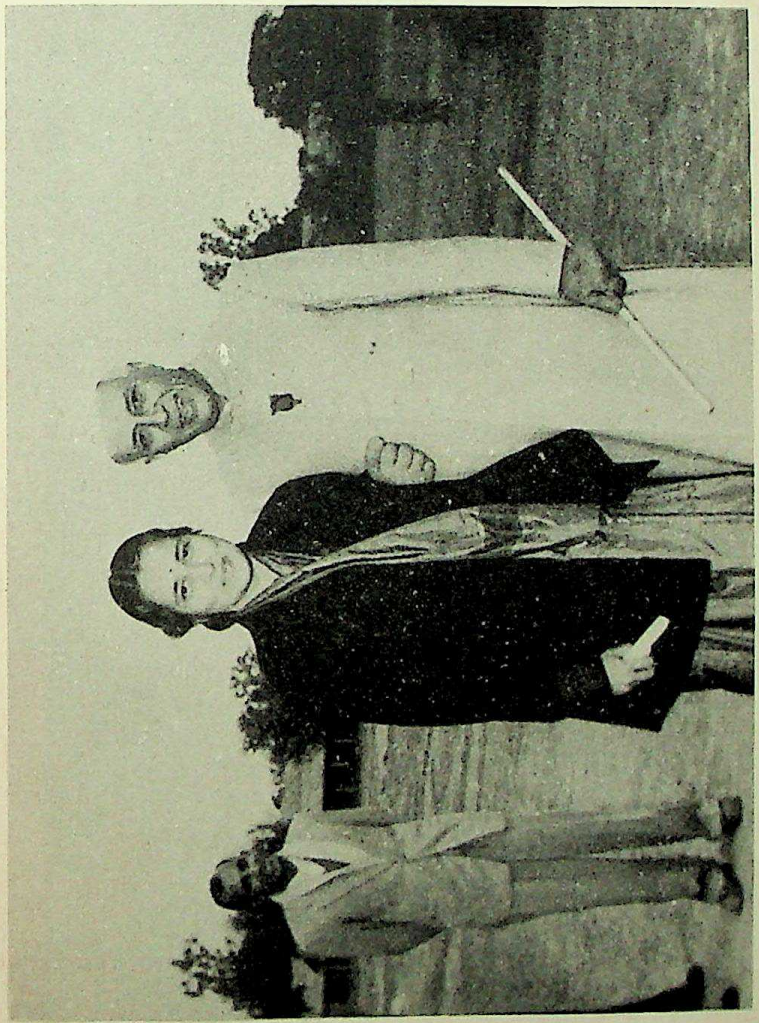

Nehru and the author's wife in 1959

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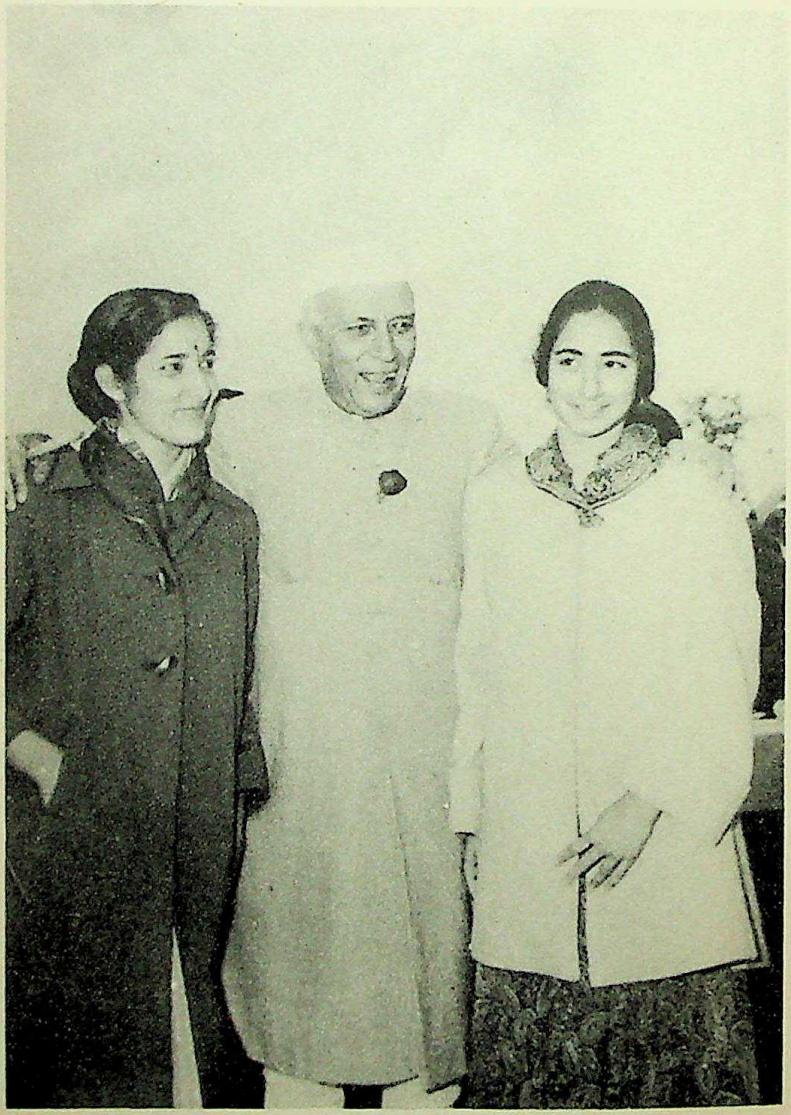

Nehru and the author's two daughters in 1959

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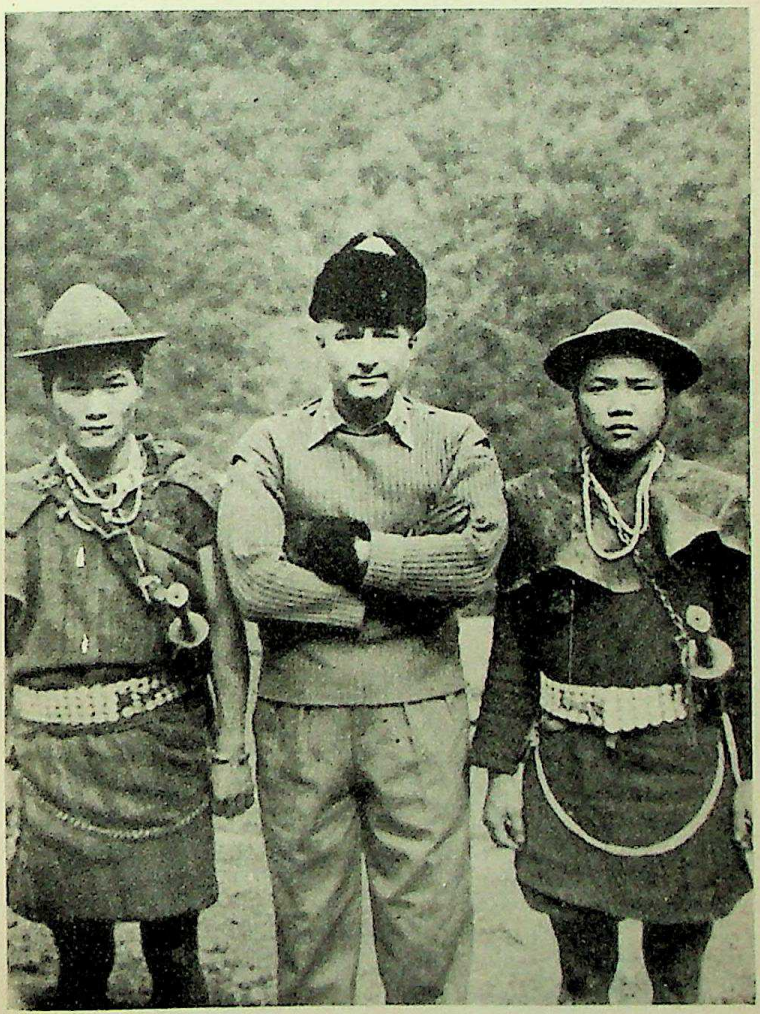

The author with two Thagin tribesmen in NEFA on the way to Longju in 1959

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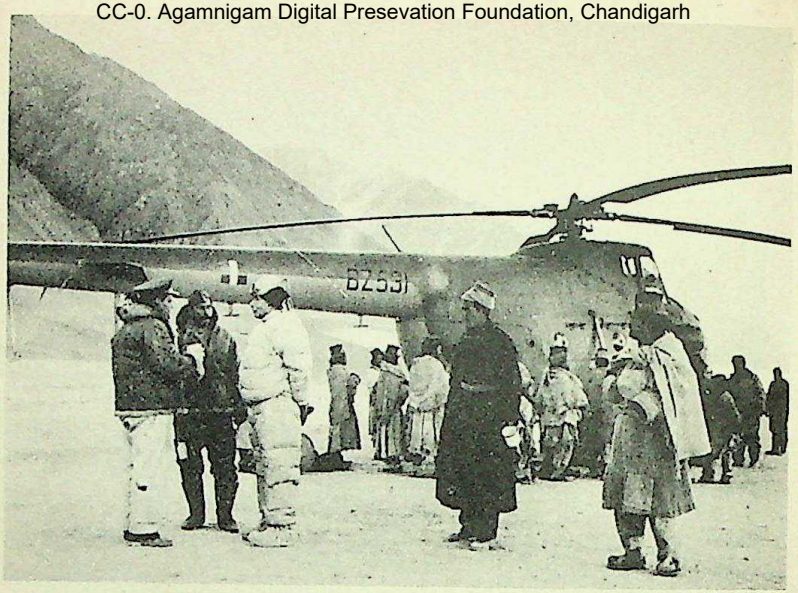
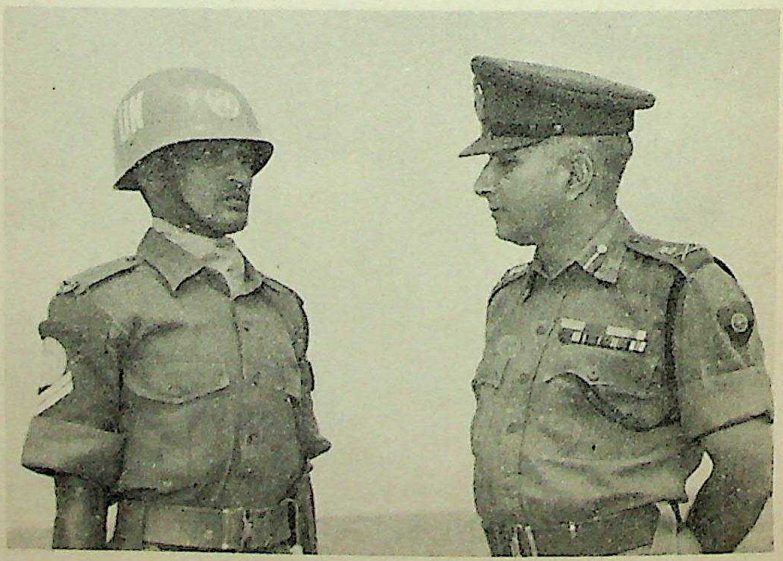


Air Vice Marshal Pinto and the author (in winter clothing) somewhere in Ladakh in 1960



An Indian Naik (Corporal) with the author in Gaza in 1961

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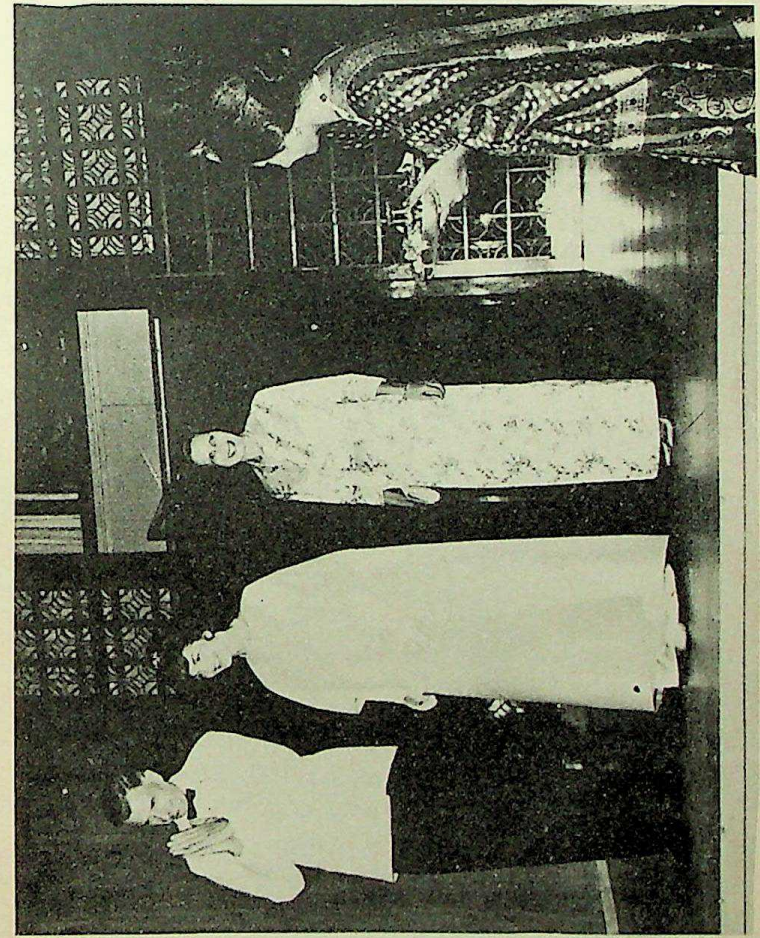

Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, Ambassador and Mrs. Galbraith and the author's daughter who, among others, received the President's wife in Delhi in 1962

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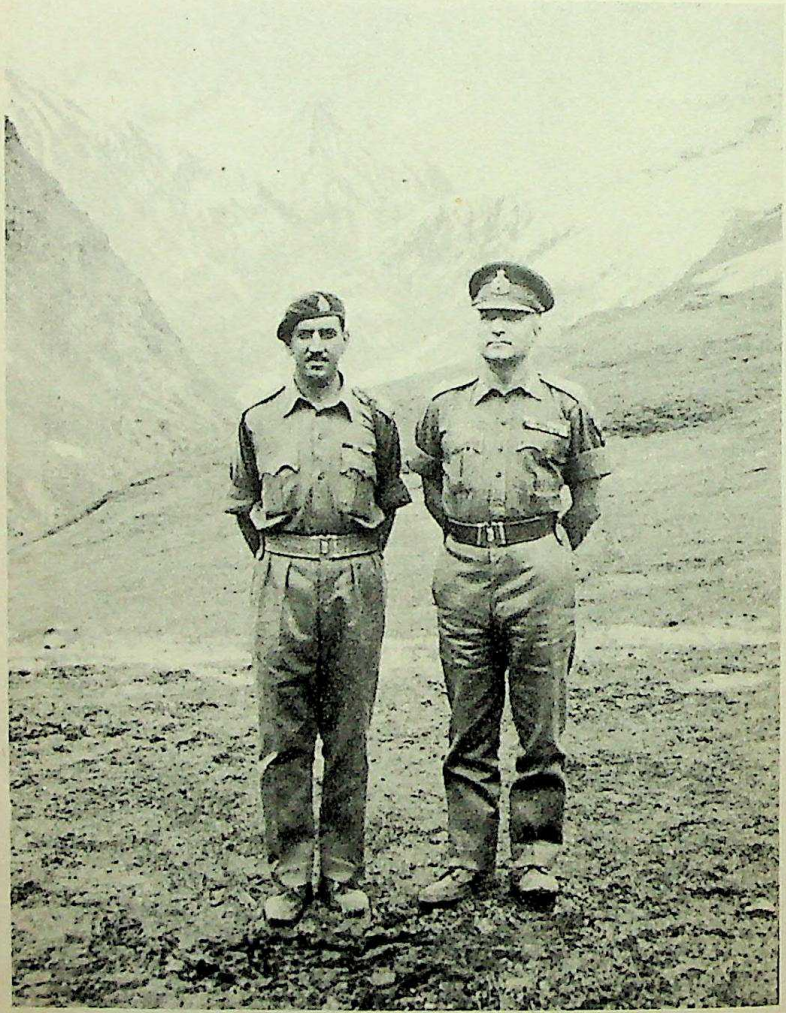

Major Dubey with the author somewhere in Kashmir in the summer of 1962

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When the latter saw us do this—which they thought we would never do—they were in utter panic and eventually released our men. This was a point of honour with us and once achieved, we were back in our own territory.

I had reached Tezpur about two in the afternoon, after a tour of Nagaland and our eastern borders in 1960 and was anxious to catch a civil plane from Calcutta to Delhi the same night. But unless I travelled back in a fast moving Air Force fighter plane from Tezpur to Calcutta, I knew I could never reach Calcutta in time. To make matters worse, the weather was cloudy and a storm was in the offing. The Air Force station commander, therefore, advised me to go the next day but I was keen not to change my programme. Squadron Leader Surinder Singh, the plucky and cooperative officiating station commander when told that there was a leak in the fuel tank of the jet in which I was to fly, put his hand to the repair of this fault himself and we took off at about 2.45 P.M. The weather became rough and we soared up to about 30,000 feet near Siliguri. In trying to look for a smoother patch, the pilot drifted away from the course towards Mt Everest. At this time I felt a loss of breath and when I told the pilot of my state he said something had gone wrong with our oxygen supply. After a few minutes, he managed to rectify this fault and struggling in nasty weather for sometime we landed at Dum Dum at dusk. I reached Delhi by a civil plane just before mid-night.

The next day I was attending a meeting in my office when I felt as if the whole of my right side had gone numb. I tried to think at first that it was only my imagination. But when this sensation persisted, I consulted an eminent physician who said that after remaining at high altitudes without oxygen and putting one's physical frame through constant and abnormal strain, it was possible to disturb the circulation of blood and sometimes even have a stroke of paralysis. This possibility naturally worried me for some hours. For two days, I remained in a state of suspense

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wondering if paralysis was going to creep upon me. On the third day, when I woke up in the morning, I felt normal once again.

As the Chinese first occupied the Aksai Chin plateau and kept nibbling our territories in Ladakh and elsewhere, we had to establish many new military posts in defence. We were looking for sturdy helicopters, in large numbers, for removal of casualties incurred in accidents, from inaccessible areas in mountainous terrain. They were also required for conveyance of essential stores, ammunition, medical supplies and for reconnaissance.

The Air Force authorities had made an exhaustive survey in 1960 and found that the Americans, the Russians and the French had suitable helicopters for our purpose, with comparable performances. The Russians had two types, one more modern than the other, but said their latest model was not available. The Russian helicopter was cheaper and supposed to be available in requisite quantities. It was also offered to us in Indian currency.

Defence Minister Krishna Menon had delved into the specifications of each type, along with his scientific and other advisers. A handful of American and French helicopters were purchased for trials and as a token, but the one selected for the bulk purchase was the Russian type. This machine had been tested only around Delhi in conditions which many of us contended were not realistic. The others had severer trials. We were anxious that it should be tried at high altitude, where it had to do its duty eventually. But Menon thought the Delhi test sufficient and informed the Russians of our willingness to buy helicopters from them.

Some Air Force experts felt the French helicopter had a better performance. Also, we had seen, in acquiring equipment for border roads, that the Russian deliveries were not always made on time, due to various reasons. I was, therefore, apprehensive that their helicopter deliveries might (as they did, in fact) be similarly delayed. At this

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stage, Menon had to proceed to New York as leader of our U.N. delegation.

I was no expert in helicopters but the fact that a new machine was being purchased, without a proper trial, kept disturbing me a great deal. Flying in them at high altitudes, in border areas, was a hazardous business for our pilots. This view was shared by Air Vice Marshal Pinto, the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Air Command, and many other Air Force officers.

Some of us were on the horns of a dilemma. Should we accept whatever the Government decided in this matter, even though we had qualms of conscience? Or, should we force the issue? I was quite clear on one point. We must not allow the lives of our pilots to be endangered unnecessarily. So, I decided to force the issue, even though I was not in the Air Force. I spoke to Air Vice Marshal Pinto and asked him if he could place, at my disposal, a Russian helicopter recently acquired, in which I could carry out a test flight in Ladakh. I told him I realized it was not my job to do this sort of thing but the circumstances were compelling. Pinto told me that whilst he shared my concern in the matter, Krishna Menon had, before leaving for New York, left definite orders that no further trials would be carried out on this machine. He also pointed out that it would be hazardous to fly at high altitudes in Ladakh in areas I had in mind, at this time of the year. My argument was that a trial must be carried out under the most difficult conditions and the Delhi test was not enough. Pinto needed little persuasion on this point and in fact agreed to accompany me on this venture. This was in December 1960.

Pinto and I flew in a Dakota from Delhi to Jammu. He ordered the Russian helicopter to join us in Leh the next day. The following morning Pinto told me the Russian pilot had sent a message that owing to subnormal temperatures, the oil in his machine was frozen and that he was unable to fly from Srinagar to Leh. Surely what was frozen

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could be melted in this age of science. Pinto and I reacted sharply and sent necessary orders that this hurdle must be jumped somehow without delay. When we reached Leh, the weather was at its best: bright and sunny, with hardly any breeze. The Russian helicopter, with its frozen oil melted, was there along with its crew. Pinto and I had proposed to go on this maiden flight together. But the Russian pilot insisted that he would take only one passenger with him.

As I was anxious to do this trip, Pinto sportingly stood down. Apart from me as the sole passenger, there was a Russian and two Indian pilots on this flight. As we rose above Leh, and proceeded towards the Karakoram Pass, we were flanked by one of the highest mass of mountains in the world (K-2, over 28,000 feet) ; and other snow-covered peaks presenting a spectacle which was a feast to the eye. I told the Russian pilot to land not far from the Karakoram Pass at a place where we had a military post. He looked around, studied his map and said that he would rather not land there as it was too near the Chinese border and also it did not have a suitable landing strip. I told him that proximity to the Chinese had nothing to do with him. It was our concern. As to the strip, it looked good enough to me. He retorted he had flown many thousand hours in war and peace and knew what he was saying. It was his view that the strip was slanting and not suitable for landing. In fact, he thought the helicopter might be damaged in a fool-hardy attempt to land. I reiterated that I wanted to land in that particular spot, and if his machine could not make it, I would say it had failed in its trial. This shook my friend because he hated to put himself in a position where he could be held responsible for breaking a diplomatic deal. I laughingly told him that if the Russians claimed they could land on the moon, how could he say he could not land here! Before I knew, he had made a bee-line and landed, where I wanted, without any mishap.

I was taking some pictures with the camera I had brought

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and examining the surrounding topography when I heard the Russian calling me back, in order to take off before the engine froze. It coughed once or twice and soon we were flying back to Leh again.

As we soared over 21,000 feet, I dozed off. The voice of one of our pilots woke me up to say: 'We are a few minutes from Leh but our fuel and oxygen are running low and our engine is not pulling properly. We may have to do an emergency landing any minute! We only hope we can cross the high mountains over which we are flying now and are able to land in the valley beyond.' The sun shone so brightly on the glistening snows that morning. It was too bad if we came to grief on such a lovely day. I crossed my fingers and hoped for the best. We lost altitude rapidly thereafter. It was a matter of touch and go. But our luck was in that day and we managed to limp into a valley just beyond, making an emergency landing not far from a military post called Thoise, separated by a high range from Leh. We were dazed as we came tearing down on terra firma. After tinkering with the automatic fuel mixture control system which was not working properly and finding that the helicopter was unfit to fly any further, we sent a wireless message to Air Vice Marshal Pinto at Leh, telling him of our location and our plight, and whether anything could be done to rescue us from where we were. He said he would do his best and asked us to keep our chins up. After an hour or so, we were thrilled to hear the drone of an aeroplane above and were delighted to see Pinto alighting shortly afterwards from his Dakota at great peril to himself and his crew. He managed to land with difficulty on an improvised airstrip which was situated precariously adjoining a river. The dimensions of its run-way were not ideal and its surface was rough.

Pinto asked us to hurry up as the light would soon begin to fade and so leaving the MI-4 helicopter behind, we hastened to board the Dakota along with the Russian pilot.

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As one of the wheels of our plane had been damaged on landing (but hastily repaired) we hoped that we would be able to take off safely.

We taxied and lined up on the 'run-way'. The pre-take off checks of instruments were completed by the pilot. No clearance had to be obtained from a 'tower' in this God-forsaken place. The brakes were released, the engines increased to take-off power and the Dakota sped across the strip, managing to take off just before the 'run-way' finished.

After a few minutes of flight, we sighted Leh and got ready for a landing. We put on our safety belts. The pilot went through his pre-landing safety checks. We then came to the final straight run-in for the landing. The wheels and flaps were down. The edge of the run-way rushed up without warning. The engines throttled back and we made another safe landing. The sun was about to set. After spending that night at Leh, we flew to Delhi the next day.

Several days before it flew on this trial, this helicopter was parked at Palam. Instead of aviation gas, a naive Indian Other Rank filled it up with kerosene oil, a grave error for which he was punished suitably. It was then thoroughly overhauled and flew several hundred miles without incident. The Russians tried to attribute the forced landing of their helicopter near Leh to the fact that we had refuelled it with kerosene oil instead of aviation gas. It is not clear why they did not put another helicopter of similar type (which was available) at our disposal for trial in Ladakh, if refuelling had made the machine in question a doubtful starter. We had no intention of condemning their helicopter but were only giving it a proper trial. On returning to Army Headquarters, I put a note on a file in which I recommended that a further check on the suitability of the Russian machine be made and its air-worthiness at high altitude and in mountainous terrain be tested further, before it was purchased.

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Krishna Menon returned from the United Nations a few days later. When he heard of this incident, he called me up and took me to task for carrying out a trial which he had forbidden. He said this was just a mishap and proved nothing in particular and that I had quite unnecessarily touched off a hornet's nest. He ended up by saying that Generals should not interfere with the procurement of equipment, which was the concern of Government. I asked him whether Government did not consist of both statesmen and soldiers and whether I should acquiesce in the purchase of a machine which had gone through insufficient tests and which might imperil the lives of our pilots.

Our Parliament discussed this incident some days later. The opposition asked why I had flown with a Russian pilot (over our positions) in Ladakh. Government defended me on this occasion, saying that the helicopter in question had to be tested in that area (Ladakh), where similar types had to fly in their normal duties later and that our pilots were being helped by their Russian counterparts in order to learn how to manoeuvre these helicopters which were new to them. All the same, an adverse impression against me had been created in the public mind once again. There was nothing I could do in the matter.

I was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal Class I on 26 January 1961, the day my elder daughter Anuradha was married. A rumour had been spread by some to belittle the award of this medal to me and made out that it was granted for building houses. Its citation[29] would, however, show why the medal was being awarded to me.

29 Its citation read: Lt Gen B. M. Kaul was commissioned in 1933. He has held a number of important appointments: Secretary Armed Forces Nationalization Committee; Military Attache in the USA; Director of Organization at Army HQ; Chief of Staff, Neutral Nations' Repatriation Commission, Korea; Commander of an Infantry Division; (before which I had commanded an Infantry Brigade for three and half years); Quartermaster General; (now Chief of the General Staff). In these appointments he has worked with marked ability, initiative and drive.

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Lt Gen J. N. Chaudhuri wrote to me on this occasion that he thought this award was the forerunner of many more to come in the service of our country. (But in his confidential note to Nehru on me at the time of my retirement, he had expressed opinions which were quite contrary to this sentiment.)

The President held an investiture a year later and pinned this medal on my tunic amidst a distinguished audience. In this moment of great pride for me, the Bombay weekly *Current*, whilst headlining this event asked sardonically if I had been given this medal for producing 'Espresso' Coffee machines? This was a baseless insinuation as I had no connection whatsoever with the production side of the Defence Ministry. By now *Current* had made so many false allegations against me that once again I thought of legal action. Nehru, however, dissuaded me from doing so on two grounds:

(*a*) He would rather that an Army General was not involved in such litigation;

(*b*) It would be better if someone else defended me publicly. This he did himself. (He had done it before and did it more than once in future.)

When Thimayya was to retire and vacate his post as Army Chief in March 1961[30] the question arose about his successor. There were two contestants, Thapar and Thorat. They both had good records of service but Thapar was senior and equally qualified. As soon as the latter was chosen to succeed Thimayya, he came to my house and said he would like me to be his Chief of the General Staff. I felt deeply honoured as every professional soldier aspires to be Chief

30 He was taking leave preparatory to retirement. A canard was started by some that Thimayya and Thorat were retired from their posts by Menon prematurely. Actually, they both retired in the normal course after doing their full tenures.

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of the General Staff one day—a post which coordinates the fighting potential of a nation.

When I took charge[31] of this appointment in March 1961, Thimayya was still the Army Chief. (Thapar was to take over after Thimayya went on leave.) Just as I tried to settle down in my new job, there was an uproar about it, engineered mainly by some of my contemporaries in the Army. They spread an impression that I had been elevated to my present post despite 'inadequate qualifications' and was being pushed up unfairly by Nehru and Menon at the expense of better men. This was a deliberate concoction of facts.

On 11 April, I went to the Lok Sabha along with some other Service officers, to hear the Defence Debate. There was a packed House and a tense atmosphere. The visitors' galleries had standing room only. Kripalani, the veteran Leader, launched a virulent attack on Nehru, Menon and me in an attempt to highlight that India's defences were in the hands of incapable men. He indicted Menon on five counts: creating cliques in the Army; lowering their morale; wasting the money of the nation; neglecting the defence of the country and lending support in the international field to totalitarian regimes. He demanded an enquiry into this state of affairs either by a committee of Parliament or a commission by the President.

Kripalani said the picture of our defence presented by Menon on the might of the Army under the latter's stewardship was encouraging and sarcastically added it was perhaps due to that 'might' that we had lost 12,000 square miles of our territory without a single blow. Kripalani then referred to the inadvisability of Russians having flown over our strategic areas in Ladakh and the possibility of their having collected the information which the Chinese needed. He

31 I took up this assignment first in an officiating capacity and was confirmed later.

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also objected to a Russian pilot having accompanied me on one of these flights. I wished I knew Kripalani—for whom I have great respect as a patriot—and place before him the facts of my case and tell him there were some others who could have been assailed by him without fear of contradiction. I was reminded at the time of a couplet by Ghalib, the famous Urdu poet:

Ham ah bhe bharte hain
To ho jate hain badnam
Woh katal bhi karte hain
To charcha nahin hota.

(If I even sigh, I become notorious, yet some others get away with murder.)

Kripalani said[32] that in appointing the present C.G.S. (i.e. me) Government had ignored some more qualified officers. He went on to indirectly refer to the case of Lt Gen Verma whose claims to promotion had been ignored and who had been superseded by 'two others' (Lt Generals Daulet Singh and Sen). The superseded officer (Verma), he said, had therefore asked for premature retirement in protest. Kripalani concluded his attack on Menon by saying, 'I am glad the Defence Minister is here. I hope he will defend himself better than he has defended the country.'

In his reply, Menon said that as a result of the violations of our territories, there had been deployment of our troops in such a way as to render any Chinese intrusion impossible. This had put a great strain on our troops. India could not very well raise an Army equal to that of the Chinese or to have weapons like the latter. He said that we were different from other countries. As we had no military alliances, we had to look after ourselves. Menon went on to say that if the Chinese were to transgress into our territory, their lines of communications would be longer than ours and

32 He actually referred to me as 'the present C.G.S.'

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they would meet trained troops of our army.

So far as the morale of our forces was concerned, Menon asserted that it was higher now than ever before. Regarding promotions in the Army, Menon said there had been talk of supersession. Actually, after the rank of Lt Colonel, promotion was by selection and no one had the 'pre-emptive right' to the next higher office and hence there was no question of supersession. Seniority was only one of the considerations.

Menon said that it was possible to produce the conclusion one wanted if one prescribed the premises. 'Acharya Kripalani,' he said, 'had no knowledge of the army and had never come near it. He would not be allowed either.' Menon said some army officers seem to have had the 'privilege' of conversing with certain members of the Parliament, short-circuiting the normal methods. He then defended my selection to the rank of Lt General and gave some facts and figures: 226 Majors were promoted Lt Colonels, superseding 485; 70 Lt Colonels were promoted, superseding 83; 39 Colonels were promoted as Brigadier, superseding 57; 7 Brigadiers promoted to the rank of Major General, superseding 17; and four Major Generals were promoted to Lt General, superseding 5. Supersession was a normal thing in the army. General Thimayya, went on Menon, had himself superseded three or four when he was made the Army Chief.

Menon said that Kripalani had been indulging in flights of fancy when he alleged that there had been many resignations from the Army. There had actually been only one case of a request for premature retirement.

When Lok Sabha rose for lunch, Nehru sent for me in his Parliament office and asked me to let him have a brief resume of my career so that he could tell the House. I scribbled the necessary information on a slip of paper but advised him to also get it verified through proper channels, which he did.

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Nehru said Kripalani spoke like-a-dictator. He said it was one thing for Acharya Kripalani's judgement to be wrong, but quite another matter for his facts to be incorrect. Nehru said it had been suggested that I[33] was not an infantry officer and confirmed that apart from some years during which I was extra regimentally employed, I had remained in the infantry for the better part of my career. Nehru then warmed up and said that if members before attacking me got to know me, they would then realize my merit. He went on to say:

> Lt Gen Kaul is one of our brightest and best officers in the Army. I say so with complete confidence. I am absolutely certain that if Kripalani knew him, he would have the same opinion. I am surprised that people should talk in this vein about the army. We have a fine army and good officers.

Replying to Kripalani's charge of allowing Russians to fly over our territory, Menon said we were in the process of buying Russian helicopters which were being tested in the areas where they were to fly in their normal duties later. Our pilots were being helped by their Russian counterparts in order to learn how to manoeuvre these helicopters which were new to them. The particular flight to which the opposition had objected carried no cameras, only one Russian, two of our own pilots and a sole passenger, the Quartermaster General (which I was then). He added there were hardly any volunteers for this flight which had soared over 20,000 feet on 2 December 1960, when he (Menon) was in New York.

After this heated debate, Menon and Kripalani shook hands and chatted over a cup of tea, saying they had no hard feelings.

On 23 April 1961, the *Times of India* came to my defence and wrote :

> In severe winter conditions a few months ago, a Russian helicopter,

33 In fact he said the 'Chief of the General Staff' whilst referring to me.

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piloted by a Soviet expert went up for an altitude test flight in Ladakh. Long before the flight was due to finish, the pilot told his only passenger that he had run out of fuel and must force-land. The helicopter landed safely in a cup-like terrain in the mountains (in Ladakh). The passenger was Lt Gen B.M. Kaul—now Chief of General Staff. Kaul had not been ordered to go up for the test flight. He had asked for the opportunity which many would have avoided as a risky undertaking. But not Kaul, who is built of sterner stuff and has a passionate disregard for safety...He was anxious to make sure for himself that the Soviet helicopter was a suitable machine for our North Eastern border. In the bargain, he risked his life and certainly made himself uncomfortable. But that is Kaul all over...He is extremely wiry and tough—is normally a pleasant person but has the reputation that he does not suffer fools easily. Above all, he is a pusher. Unsparingly industrious himself, he cannot tolerate sloth in others. Bijji Kaul has the magnetic quality of infecting those around him with his own enthusiasm. He is a man with a purpose in life and the purpose goes beyond the limits of daily chores...quick at decisions and always in a desperate hurry, he sets a pace which is not easy to cope with...

Despite this sort of occasional compliment, I was being assailed more now than ever before perhaps because of my association with Menon. If some people resented Menon being the Defence Minister, I certainly was not responsible for his being selected for this post. If they thought I was acquiescing in any steps taken by him which were prejudicial to Service interests, I say here without any fear of contradiction that I never did any such thing, as will be clear to the reader after going through this book. Moreover, I never had any personal advancement, due to Menon's good offices and advanced in my career due to my personal record and after I was duly recommended by my military superiors. My role with Menon is not what has been made out to be. I dealt with this complex personality, more resolutely than most, and always worked with him to the best interests of my service.

A few days earlier, I had received reliable reports that

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the Chinese proposed to establish a post at Barahoti, in the Central Sector, as soon as the snows melted that year. When I mentioned this fact to Thimayya, he agreed that we must take every step to forestall the Chinese.

When I asked HQ Eastern Command to send a party of troops to Barahoti for the above purpose, their reaction was that if they did so, the Chinese were bound to react—which would set in motion a chain reaction, for which there were inadequate troops under their command. I did not wish to argue on this point and after obtaining Thimayya's approval, I therefore took the matter in my own hand and detailed for this task some troops who had recently done a high-altitude course in Kashmir. I put them under the command of Captain (now Lt Col) N. Kumar, a reputed mountaineer, who had been a member of our Everest Expedition not long ago.

As I wanted this party to try and reach Barahoti ahead of the Chinese, and long before the snows melted, all I told Kumar was that if he could climb 28,000 feet, as he had done in the Everest Expedition recently, he could certainly climb about 15,000 feet on this occasion. Heavy snow on the way at this time of the year should not trouble him as he had seen greater quantities on the way to Mount Everest. I said, lastly, that he was being given the honour to undertake this hazardous task in the name of his country and I had no doubt that he would do it. I wished him all the luck on this trek.

The winter on these heights was still far from over. But I felt that if we had to get to Barahoti earlier than anyone had ever reached there in previous years and ahead of the Chinese, we must do so without any delay. Kumar understood this position but asked for certain facilities for this 'expedition', which I gave. As he was a stout-hearted leader with similar men under his command, after weathering many storms on the way and, contrary to the expectation of some knowledgeable prophets, he

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hoisted the Indian flag on the plateau of Barahoti long before the Chinese could set their foot on it that year.

I later made strenuous efforts and maintained this garrison by air. I built up shelters so that they could live there all round the year and prepared a scheme for building a road up to this point—under the guidance of Lt Col Mark Valadares, a fanatical engineer who had proved his worth often in the past under difficult circumstances.

Thapar took[34] over as the Army Chief in April 1961. He was conscientious, able and impartial; professionally honest and devoted to the interests of the Army. He had the courage of his convictions and was *not* afraid of expressing his opinions, even though unpalatable, in the presence of those above him. Much unfair propaganda was organized against his appointment as the Army Chief by interested parties to spread the impression that Nehru (and Menon) was selecting 'wrong' type of people for responsible posts.

Among others that I had to deal with at Delhi were Lt Gen Wadalia, Deputy Chief of the Army Staff; Lt Gen P.P. Kumaramangalam, Adjutant General and Lt Gen R.K. Kochhar, the Quartermaster General. The Military Secretary in charge of promotions and postings, when I was C.G.S., was Maj Gen Moti Sagar and his deputy Brigadier M.M. Badshah. Moti and I had been at College and he had followed me in the East Surrey Regiment. We had met often during our career and had commanded 4 and 27 Divisions respectively in the same Corps under Lt Gen J. N. Chaudhuri. In 1954, when he was posted as Director of the Territorial Army and I was to take over, under General Thimayya, the assignment of Brigadier, General Staff, Southern Command, from him, I had agreed to let him stay on in Poona (and take over the post of D.T.A. myself) as he said his son, suffering from infantile paralysis,

34 When Thimayya went on leave preparatory to retirement.

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was under treatment at Poona. Moti had also reciprocated on suitable occasions.

'Mani' Badshah belonged to 1/14 Punjab Regiment in which he had served with Field Marshal M. Ayub Khan, the present President of Pakistan, had commanded the Sikh Regimental Centre with skill and had been the Military Attache at Karachi with distinction. As commander of an infantry brigade on the Indo-Pak border, he had excelled.[35] Later, when I was Quartermaster General—he displayed high integrity and exceptional ability when he served on my staff.

O. Pulla Reddi was the Defence Secretary. H. C. Sarin held the post of Joint Secretary (G), dealing with important subjects like military operations, intelligence, senior officers' promotion and services' publicity. He was an I.C.S. officer who had been in the Defence Ministry longest and knew his work backwards. He never showed any signs of emotion except when something wrong was being done, which he challenged. John Lal, another Joint Secretary on Menon's staff, was an expert on Sikkim and Bhutan. Admiral D. Shankar was the capable Controller General of Defence Production. He laid the foundations of many new and vital defence installations[36]. The Financial Adviser to the Defence Ministry was Jayashankar, who served two masters: Finance Minister Morarji Desai and Defence Minister Krishna Menon—and often fell between two stools. He had a congenial personality and an excellent brain.

Vishwanathan was the Home Secretary. He was correct in his manner and brilliant in his work. B. N. Mullick was the Director of Intelligence Bureau in the Home

35 He had to his credit a resounding victory against the Pakistani troops at Hussainewalla, as a result of which the Brigadier commanding the Pakistan brigade in this battle was sacked.

36 The fruits of which are being reaped today and little credit for which is going to him.

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Ministry. He was responsible for collecting intelligence along our borders and from abroad, and had direct access to the Prime Minister at all times. He was patriotic and most conscientious. He and I worked in great harmony. We met frequently, exchanged information on many important subjects of mutual interest. Hooja, his No. 2, was a capable and dedicated worker with a captivating personality. M. J. Desai was the Foreign, Boothalingam the Finance and S. S. Khera the Cabinet Secretary.

Maj Gen J. S. Dhillon was my Deputy. I selected him for this post as I could trust him and because he was suitably qualified. He had done a course at the Imperial Defence College, had commanded an Infantry Division in J and K and was a Sapper officer, which is always an added advantage.

Brig D. B. Chopra was Director of Military Operations. When he was promoted shortly afterwards, I appointed Brig 'Monty' Palit to this post for more than one reason. He was a promising officer who had written some books on military subjects which had been published abroad and well received. He had commanded a brigade under me in 4 Infantry Division where I formed an excellent opinion about his military ability. He was professionally alert and extremely well informed. Brig. Virendra Singh was my selfless and competent Director of Staff Duties. After a few months he retired from service voluntarily to look after many of his private activities (and was later re-employed as Director NCC). Brig 'Jangu' Satarawala, took over from him. He had an attractive personality, was a tireless worker and coordinated the activities of all Directors at Army Headquarters. Maj Gen D. C. Misra was Director, Military Training and worked well, loyally and with devotion. Maj Gen K. N. Dubey was Director General of Border Roads. I found him unimpeachable in character, affable and efficient. Brig Antia, my Director of Weapons and Equipment, worked with a missionary

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zeal. Col B. N. Khanna of the Territorial Army was one of my most trusted stalwarts. I had many good officers in the ranks of Lt Col and Major—Lt Cols D.S. Rao, B.N. Khanna, T. B. Kapur, and Ujjal Singh, all loyal and dedicated workers, and Tilak Malhotra, my capable Military Assistant. Brig Kim Yadav was my outstanding Commandant of the Jungle Warfare School. Among my personal stenographers were two excellent men : Swami and Baweja and among my diligent peons were Jeonu and Hazara Singh. I had on the whole an excellent team working with me.

At this stage I think I should say a few words on the schedule I observed those days. Ever since T. W. Rees had taught me, twenty-six years earlier, the importance of working hard in life, I used to get up early in the morning and work till I retired to bed late at night. I was a slave of no habits, seldom enjoyed the luxury of having tea in bed, had a light breakfast of milk and fruit, worked without respite till late in the evenings, often going without lunch, and attended to necessary social duties. I also found time to delve into history, literature, poetry and drama, see plays and climb mountains as a hobby. I worked for an average of about eighteen hours a day and went to bed well past midnight. It was my habit to keep up to date with my work, however heavy it was, and pend little or nothing till the next day. I dealt with my mail, whatever its volume, with clock-like regularity. In addition, I disposed of the compassionate cases of all sorts of needy people, from all walks of life, which came before me, sympathetically and with speed. I managed to snatch little sleep each night in this hectic routine. My maxim was that there were not enough hours in each day to do justice to all that I had to do. I seldom used an elevator and virtually ran up the stairs leading up to my office, always keeping a fast pace in all my movements and activity. I luckily enjoyed excellent health with a robust

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physique and hence could stand sustained physical and mental strain. When holding command of troops or touring in difficult and dangerous areas, as I did from time to time, I observed a similar routine and was amused, therefore, when I heard some officers complaining of toiling hard when in fact they only worked for trade-union hours and seldom indulged in hazardous activities, whilst they had their full share of golf, polo, other recreation and small talk. I could seldom suffer fools and believed in bull-dozing through work. No excuse for delay or inaction seemed good enough to me nor did my superiors frighten me on account of only protocol. I knew many of our political leaders then holding powerful positions but had enjoyed their acquaintance long before the present Government came into power, when few of my colleagues dared to get near them lest they drew the wrath of the British.

On taking over my assignment as Chief of the General Staff, I found that grave threats lurked around our vast frontiers. There was the menace from Pakistan and from China all along our borders from Ladakh to NEFA and also the Nagas, not to mention the Portuguese problem in Goa. Our biggest threat was from the birth of the unholy alliance between Pakistan and China. It was quite clear from the frequent troop movements they were making and the incidents they were provoking from time to time that they meant to maintain constant tension all along our borders and keep us guessing. I was not sure when these countries meant to wage war against us and for how long they would keep us under a psychological threat. It appeared vital that we remained vigilant and prepared for any eventuality. Nehru and his colleagues still hoped, however, that our problems with these countries would be solved peacefully.

This was the first time I was filling a post of some consequence which directly dealt with the operational

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aspect of India's defence or its weapons and equipment. Till now I only dealt with these matters indirectly and from a comparatively lower level. Now that I was CGS, I planned to make an assessment whether the Indian Army, as it stood then, was in a position to cope with these threats. If not, in what respects and what steps were necessary to rectify the situation. At the same time I felt the need to get more familiar with the ground and seeing the areas at high altitudes where we had to organize our defences. I, therefore, visited our important forward and other posts, some of them many times, along our 2,500 mile border from Ladakh to NEFA and Nagaland. There is nothing like seeing a place for yourself instead of only reading about it in a file or seeing it on a map. Troops are also glad to see a senior officer amidst them in difficult areas. This process took several months.

The additional needs of our armed forces in manpower[37] and material became clearer to me after my detailed tours of the areas mentioned above. I then waded through the sea of red tape and faced many frustrating situations.

As regards the question of military intelligence, I found that the Intelligence Bureau of the Home Ministry was responsible for collecting intelligence about foreign armies. As they did so with inadequate resources, its evaluation by us was not, therefore, as accurate as it should have been, nor was its dissemination to field formations quick enough. (If the Intelligence Bureau or the Army wanted more or better qualified staff or more suitable equipment to collect or evaluate intelligence, they seldom got them sanctioned financially.)

As regards training our forces, extensive individual and collective exercises were carried out but on antiquated and deficient equipment as we were not provided with modern equipment in sufficient quantities. Our train-

37 In addition to men, we had a serious shortage of officers both in number and quality.

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ing 'areas' were few and far between and despite repeated requests, Government was unable to allot to us what we required where we needed them, apparently due to industrial and agricultural development in those areas. This important problem should have been solved somehow.

So far as tactics was concerned, we perhaps could have studied and practised more to counter the Chinese ways of warfare or to find suitable answers for them. Government cannot be blamed for this as it was purely a professional omission on the part of senior military officers at various levels. The General Staff as a whole and various Army, Corps and divisional commanders should have paid greater attention to this aspect. There was nothing to prevent these Generals from taking such action without reference to any one. If they had any difficulty, they could have brought this to the notice of the higher authorities. None of us, however, made sure that this was done. Nor was special training in guerilla warfare or improvisation imparted which could have, to some extent, at least, provided an answer to our shortages, in manpower and conventional weapons and equipment. The onus for this rests on all Generals in the Indian Army. I am therefore prepared to share[38] this responsibility, as Chief of the General Staff, during the years 1961–62 whilst I held this assignment, with all concerned at different levels.

Acclimatization of personnel, performance of equipment and vehicles, construction of air fields and accommodation for men and material, at high altitudes, were some of the complex questions to which I applied my mind.

The military problem along our borders was mixed up with the political aspect in the sensitive areas of Bhutan and Nepal. As regards Nepal, which was nominally independent during the British Rule in India, I realized how important it was for us to have friendly relations with that

38 No General can either be absolved or singled out for this lapse.

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country. When India attained freedom, she respected Nepal's independence and sovereignty, sympathizing at the same time with the democratic forces of the Nepali Congress (who were striving hard to overthrow the Ranas). The Ranas were hereditary rulers of Nepal and always occupied the post of Prime Minister. We won the gratitude of the King for giving him shelter during a crisis. We also became popular with the Nepali Congress and the people of Nepal (as we espoused their cause).

Earlier, Nepal was living in medieval conditions, without any roads to speak of, or railways and only one airfield. The Nepali Congress leaders tried to make drastic changes overnight and in the process antagonized the new King. When India continued to sympathize with them, the King was irritated by our attitude. (Relations between India and Nepal, therefore, deteriorated but improved later once again). China, a common threat to both India and Nepal, is exploiting every opportunity to create misunderstandings between these two countries in furtherance of her own ulterior motives.

The relations between India and China had been deteriorating steadily for some time. The number of incursions by the Chinese had been increasing by and by. India had made repeated protests to China but in vain. The Chinese game was to thrust forward in areas where we were not present, specially in Ladakh, and establish their posts. Lately, they had become more belligerent than ever. Some senior Army officers began playing up to public sentiment and spreading an impression, at this stage, in self-defence, in various political circles that they, on their part, were prepared to stem the tide of the Chinese advance in our territory but Nehru and Menon did not let them do so. This was just tall talk. In fact, when a proposal was made by an expert in the External Affairs Ministry many

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years ago that we should establish a claim on our territory —as was being done by China—by putting up symbolic posts all along our border, from Ladakh to NEFA, the Military High Command had expressed their inability then to accept this proposal because of various shortages of resources and also the inadvisability of having posts on our border in 'penny packets', which, according to them, was unsound militarily. In the meantime, our government did not take adequate action to make up the various shortages from which the Army suffered. The result was that China began occupying our territory, almost at will. Various sections in the public, on frequently hearing this, clamoured for strong action by India against China.

Nehru sent for me more than once during this period to discuss the problems of border defence. I told him the Armed Forces had not been strengthened by Government, despite repeated representations from Service Headquarters over a number of years and so were now *not* in a position to deal with the Chinese effectively. Nehru never relished this argument.

Some Opposition leaders of the Parliament had a secret meeting with Nehru in the External Affairs Ministry —which the Defence Minister, the Army Chief and I also attended—in which he outlined the military situation along our borders. . . . Nehru's explanation fell on deaf ears and one Opposition leader said something to the following effect: 'There are two things precious to man—land and women. You have already presented 12,000 square miles of our land to the Chinese. Do you now want to present our women to them also[39]?' Nehru went red in the face but did not say a word.

Nehru was aware of the mounting criticism of the people on this subject but also knew the handicaps from

39 Insan ko do chiz piari hain: zamin aur istri. Aap ne Chinion ko 12,000 square meel zamin to de di, kia ab hamari istrian bhi unko dene ka irada hai?

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which our Armed Forces were suffering. He was therefore anxious to devise some via media and take action, short of war, in order to appease the people. Nehru[40] accordingly had a meeting in his room somewhere in the autumn of 1961 in which Krishna Menon, General Thapar and I were present. He first saw on a military map all the recent incursions China had made against us. He said that whoever succeeded in establishing (even a symbolic) post, would establish a claim to that territory, as possession was nine-tenths of law. If the Chinese could set up posts, why couldn't we? He was told that owing to numerical and logistical difficulties, we could not keep up in this race with the Chinese. If we inducted more posts in retaliation, we would be unable to maintain them logistically. Also, China with her superior military resources could operationally make the position of our small posts untenable. We had, however, already established a few nominal posts, which we were maintaining with some effort.

A discussion then followed, the upshot of which I understood to be that (since China was unlikely to wage war with India,) there was no reason why we should not play a game of chess and a battle of wits with them, so far as the question of establishing posts was concerned. If they advanced in one place, we should advance in another. In other words, keep up with them, as far as possible, and maintain a few of our symbolic posts—where we could—in what we were convinced was our territory. This defensive step on our part at best might irritate the Chinese but no more. This was how, I think, this new policy on our borders was evolved (which was referred to by some as 'forward' policy). By the end of the year we

40 Nehru was always kept informed of the violations of our border by China or any other country. He had, on occasions, consulted me informally in this connection. Till the autumn of 1961, though he was perturbed at the increasing number of these violations by China, he never thought of any retaliation in practice, though theoretically he threatened the Chinese more than once.

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had established over fifty such posts in Ladakh and NEFA and hence our occupational rights in some 2000 square miles of Indian territory. These posts were set up not for the purpose of administration, as there was no population there, but to ensure that the Chinese did not repeat the Aksai Chin story in NEFA or even in Ladakh. I think Nehru framed this policy principally for the benefit of the Parliament and the public and also perhaps as a 'strategy' of beating the Chinese at their own game. He hit upon it during a period when the India-China relationship was deteriorating fast. He saw in it one reply to his critics. He landed in this situation due to constant and unrealistic criticism from the Opposition benches in the Parliament against the way he was handling the border situation. (Events then developed in such a way that they escalated into a clash between the Chinese and us in 1962 which came to everyone in India as a major surprise.)

R. K. Nehru had invited Jai Prakash Narain and me to dinner in 1961. We discussed many matters including the Chinese threat to our borders. J.P., as he is popularly known, is 64 years old. He is unassuming, magnanimous and leads an austere life seeking no limelight. He was a renowned rebel against the British. I was reminded on this occasion of the many sacrifices he has made for this country during the underground movement. He is a fighter of lost causes and many of his dreams have remained unfulfilled. He has spent years in jails for defying the British where many atrocities were imposed on him but which failed to break his spirit. He once had a big prize on his head. His adventures in the 1942 movement are legendary. He was slapped on the face by the police as he fell asleep under constant interrogation for fifty days and nights without a break. He had been kept in custody

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in tiny solitary cells (for escaping from police custody earlier) for sixteen months.

In 1946 he was set free and came to Delhi where I met him along with 'General' Shah Nawaz of INA fame, frequently. I have always had a soft spot for J.P. and thought of him once as a possible successor to Nehru. I met him again in Jullundur in 1949-50 at a public meeting which he was addressing and which my wife and I had gone to attend. I admire his integrity and patriotism but wish he had not withdrawn from active public life, even though he was disillusioned. He has served us valiantly, though never in any Government office, and has excellent education, personality and decorum. He also has patience, tact and poise. He has spoken in India and abroad about our problems worthily. The irony of the situation, however, is that whenever he talks of accord between India, Kashmir, Nagas or Pakistan, his loyalty is held in doubt instead of his wisdom being appreciated by the very people whom he had served better than most. Later, when others talk of the same accord, they are applauded. There are many among us today who are questioning his bonafides as if they can ever be questioned.

Maj Gen Hari Chand Badhwar and I had known each other since 1946 when we first met. He was one of those gallant officers whose loyalty to the Indian Army had not wavered despite many tortures the Japanese had inflicted on him as a prisoner during World War II. He was decorated with a M.B.E. for displaying exceptional grit in this episode. He was one of the colourful characters of our army. In 1961 it was discovered that he had cancer of the lung and that he had only a few months more to live. I at once went to Bombay where Hari was posted and saw him for a few hours. He was taking this situation very bravely himself but was concerned about his family in case something happened to him. He mentioned to me that he

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would like to have the opportunity of treatment in USA where the great cancer expert, Dr. Peck, might give him another lease of life, beyond the present forecast.

On return to Delhi I tried to raise sufficient funds privately for Hari's expenses of transportation and treatment in USA. I decided initially to contribute what I could to this fund myself. Then 'I passed the hat' around to some prosperous senior officers of the Armoured Corps (Hari's parent arm) but without response. Here were men who normally waxed eloquent about their corps and indulged in much other tall talk but at this hour of need, none of them came forward to help Hari with a single penny giving various 'reasons' for not doing so. In the meantime Hari had received favourable response from the American Ambassador Galbraith who promised to help.

I felt it would be more appropriate and dignified if in a situation like this our own and not a foreign Government came to his rescue. I therefore approached Menon and Nehru informally (having found General Thapar helpful in the matter). They said they had been advised that it was not possible for Government to give any financial help as by doing so they would create an awkward precedent. Here was a good man dying and there was the possibility of a precedent standing in the way—as if every case in our administration was judged on the merit of 'precedent' alone. I asked Nehru again if I could be permitted to approach the American Embassy, whom Hari had also approached on his own, in my personal capacity. To this he reclutantly agreed. By a coincidence, Chester Bowles came to Delhi the next day. I approached Galbraith on the subject and saw Chester Bowles in the former's residence. My request was that the latter should take Hari, escorted by his wife, in his personal plane to USA when he returned there from Delhi in about three days' time as Hari could not afford a passage himself. Bowles said without any

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hesitation that he would be delighted to do so. Hari and his wife rushed to Delhi and were just in time to accompany Chester Bowles back to the States. When I saw them off at the air port at Delhi, I was surprised that not one of his colleagues from the Indian Army or the Armoured Corps had come to bid Hari good luck on a trip from which he might never return (did they not know he was going?). In fact he noticed this lapse on their part sadly.

I was later informed by Col C. A. Curtis, the American Military Attache in Delhi that U. S. Army Secretary Elvis J. Starr Jr. had obtained the American Government's sanction for free hospitalization of Hari in USA. This was a major concession, facilitated by the kindness of Bowles who had, I think, seen President Kennedy on the subject and arranged this and many other facilities for Hari. I must say Bowles had risen to the occasion like a giant.

Hari was then treated in New York by Doctor Peck. Everyone including Chester Bowles who came in contact with Hari was deeply impressed by the courage he displayed when his life was hanging in the balance. His wife went through a great ordeal during this period and stood by Hari bravely. After a few months' treatment and a slight improvement Hari returned to India in November. Lt Gen Shiv Bhatia, Director General of the Armed Forces Medical Sciences and I met him on arrival. We had fought hard to save his life but no one can ever fight fate. In a few days, and despite everyone's efforts, he caught a chill and ironically, the cancer patient died of bronchitis.

My daughter Anuradha and her husband had gone to Calcutta for their honeymoon. They had been together barely a week when operations broke out in Nagaland. Ajay Sapru whose fighter squadron was in NEFA volunteered for service in this emergency and was sent the next day somewhere on the Eastern border. Anu was shaken by

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this sudden development as any bride would be. A few days later she came back to live with us. We noticed she looked out of sorts and had her medically checked up. To our horror, we found she had two enlarged cysts which the doctors said must be removed without delay. We took her to Bombay for this major operation. I and my wife, Dhanno, had an anxious time, hoping that all went well. Hardly had Anu recovered, and was still convalescing, when I heard that Ajay's right lung had collapsed. This came to us as a great shock. I rushed him to the well known lung hospital in Aundh where he underwent a major operation in which Col Chak, the brilliant Surgeon, had to excise a portion of his lung. Anu took Ajay's illness to heart, began brooding for hours on end and soon became a shadow of her former self. One day she went to pieces and doctors diagnosed that she had had a nervous breakdown. This was the last straw. It was heart rending seeing her in this state.

My misfortunes were conspiring together. I felt very lonely at this time. It all seemed rough justice to me. But I took consolation from Washington Gladden's few lines :

> And fierce though fiends may fight, Long though angels hide,
>
> I know that truth and right have the universe on their side.

A note was being struck now in some circles that I might succeed Nehru. For instance, D.F. Karaka, the editor of the *Current,* in its edition of 7 October 1961 wrote:

> Nehru has learnt to have confidence in General Kaul and regards him as an insurance against any possible breaches of army discipline and disruption of democracy...If Nehru ever felt inclined to name a successor to himself, it is even possible that discarding all the old and known Congress types, he would not be averse to making so unorthodox a choice as General Kaul.

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This article then went on to say :

> If Kaul opens his mouth, it is usually only to give an order and unless he (Kaul) is in a position to give an order, he is content to keep quiet... Kaul is the man to watch. He will not only become the Chief of the Army Staff; he may one day even become Prime Minister of India...

Some politicians and soldiers, therefore, out of jealousy, wanted to rule out this possibility and took steps to assassinate my image in public by all possible manner and means.

I accompanied Thapar to England in August 1961 to attend an exercise being run by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Louis Mountbatten, Britain's Chief of Defence. I thought of getting out of this commitment, owing to my daughter Anu's illness, but my wife, Dhanno, assured me she would be able to look after her and that I should not interrupt my duties. Leaving behind Anu in this state was not easy. After much hesitation, however, I proceeded to England. On reaching London, after short halts en route at Gaza and Beirut, I heard Anu's condition was unchanged. I could imagine what suffering and torture she and Dhanno must be enduring in turn. No mother can bear to see her child in such agony.

I was visiting England in 1961 after a lapse of twenty-eight years. Much had happened since. India was no longer under British Rule nor was Britain a world power any more.

We were looked after well by our hosts in London and had a successful exercise at Camberley directed brilliantly by Mountbatten in which Thapar was congratulated by the former Maj Gen Yahiyah Khan, my opposite number in Pakistan and now their C-in-C, sat near me during these few days at Camberley and we had some interesting dis-

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cussions. I addressed selected officers at the War Office, at Mountbatten's instance, on some of the problems which confronted us in the Indian Army. I also met the head of War Office Intelligence, Maj Gen Strong apart from meeting the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and his deputy, Gen Sir John Anderson (?).

The British officers generally looked at Thapar and me sceptically, wondering how we were 'carrying' our high ranks without British assistance. Some of them had prophesied the doom of Indians in the army not many years ago. There were other British officers, however, who were genuinely pleased to see us flourish.

When I returned from Camberley, the retired British officers of the Jat Regiment living in UK invited me to a re-union held in London. I was delighted to meet many old friends including Brig McPherson who had looked after me as my Brigade Commander, when I was a Subaltern.

I went to meet Vinit Haksar, my nephew, at Oxford where he was a don. He took me around the university and related to me the story where a member of their staff had said sometime ago:

> I am a Master at the Balliol College
> And what I don't know is not knowledge.

I spent a Sunday each at Brighton and Cambridge, saw the Air Display at Farnborough, and visited the factory where our Vickers tank was being manufactured.

In London, I was entertained by the Burmah Shell boss, Sinclair, among others and met G. K. Reddy, the capable correspondent of *Times of India* and his talented wife Kanta as also the affable Maj Gen P. S. Choudhury and his charming wife Tripat who were leading a retired life in U.K. I went to Paris for a day's temporary duty and then flew to Berlin, on two days' leave, where I reached on

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15 September 1961.

A representative of the city's popular Burgomaster, Willy Brandt, met me on arrival at the airport with a bouquet and a letter in which he regretted he was kept away from receiving me personally due to elections in the town that day. He went on to say :

I want to express my appreciation for your visit...By viewing the situation in this city with your own eyes, I am sure you will gather an impression here that may prove useful to your government. No city could shelter a greater love for peace than does Berlin, where the horrible consequences of war are felt so keenly even today. Still we are standing up for our right in the manner we choose. It is human right we plead for, neither more, nor less than that...

I met Herr Brandt later that evening and found him a striking, sincere and vigorous leader with a promise.

I had been in Berlin last during Hitler's regime. Berlin had gone through countless privations since and had only survived by its indomitable spirit. The Germans had toiled hard to bring prosperity to their land once again. Every one admired how speedily they had rehabilitated themselves.

I talked to many Germans about the building of a wall between East and West Berlin only a month ago and the division of the German Capital into four occupation sectors : Russian, American, British and the French. I found the wall was generally unpopular. There were some Germans who did not express any opinions at all. There were others, however, who spoke more freely, disapproving of the wall and the prolonged occupation of Berlin, which they thought was an affront to their nation.

That night when I was in my room in the hotel, I was very worried about my daughter's illness at Delhi. I wondered what her condition was. I wished I had remained with her

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instead of coming abroad, and looked after her. I felt helpless sitting so far away from her, when she might be in need of me. I was also assailed by the thoughts of how, in recent years, some of my contemporaries and adversaries, resentful of my progress in life, left no stone unturned to run me down, belittle my various efforts and distort my image. What hurt me most was my professional competence being questioned. Untruths were spread widely and maliciously to arouse hatred against my person. My sense of patriotism and self-respect were deeply injured and I wondered at the unscrupulousness of my detractors. I thought my critics had been less than just to me. I had no platform from where I could defend myself or bring facts to light. Amidst my onerous duties, this sort of mud-slinging on me began to strain my nerves and the world seemed to be full of wicked men. I had stood up to it all long enough, but as I was not a Super Man, I was beginning to reach the end of my tether. I realized that man must brave adversity with courage and not be depressed unduly. But is there a man who can say to himself that he has never been pressed to the point of breaking down, under certain stresses or pressing circumstances in all his life? Actually, most people—however strong—betray weakness at some time or another; only, they hate to admit this fact. On my part I had reached a stage when I was completely fed up and just did not care two hoots about anything.

The sun had set. I was all alone in the room. I seemed to hear melancholy music far away. My throat was choked and parched with thirst. My temples were throbbing furiously, my pulse was racing and my heart was beating fast. I was extremely depressed and agitated. In this state of utter distress, I lay in bed, wondering whether my misfortunes would ever end and at the futility of this woeful life. In the same breath, I reminded myself that it is better to keep fighting, whatever the odds, and that I

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must persevere with my misfortunes, like a man. Then, with one big effort, I managed to pull myself together.

The mental strain I had gone through enervated me sufficiently to keep me indisposed for a while after which I flew back to Delhi only to find that my son-in-law and elder daughter were still far from well and had seen more than their share of serious illness of late. My heart wept for both.

It is not my intention to describe the episode of 'Goa' as if it was a major operational victory for us. In fact I am fully conscious of the smallness of its magnitude. I am relating this incident here to show how we—after Independence—redeemed a pledge we had made with our people of liberating a piece of Indian territory from foreign Rule.

The Portuguese occupied Diu, Daman and Goa over four hundred years ago. Whilst we were under British Rule, there was nothing we could do in this matter. But when we had attained freedom in 1947, we were also anxious to rid the country of the French and Portuguese enclaves. The French left peacefully like the British but the Portuguese seemed determined to stay. Repeated attempts on our part to settle this affair by negotiations were spurned by Portugal. Whatever the legal or constitutional position, no country worth its name could permit foreign pockets on its territory.

Goans were kept in a subservient position in Diu, Daman and Goa. They were segregated and not allowed to step in certain localities reserved for the Whites. If they agitated for their rights and struggled for liberation, they were treated sternly, imprisoned and tortured. The public in India and specially Nehru were getting restive on this issue. This was an unfinished business since we attained freedom and had to be settled one day. Certain countries had vested interests and were content to let this matter

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drag as its settlement in our favour was likely to have repercussions elsewhere, to their detriment. In 1960 the Angolan and Mozambique Colonies of the Portuguese in Africa had rebelled. They made a fervent appeal to India that if she got rid of the Portuguese from their soil, it would accelerate the latter's liquidation in Africa.

Our leaders were divided on this issue. Some of them including Nehru[41] advocated the liberation of our territory from Portuguese rule as they argued it was our inherent right to free ourselves from foreign yoke. There were others who stipulated that we should do so only by peaceful means. Morarji Desai was one of them and as Chief Minister of Bombay in 1956, posted his police on the borders to prevent unarmed volunteers from entering Goa.

During 1960 and early 1961, Goan nationalist leaders intensified their pressure on our Government to take strong and positive action against the Portuguese regarding this matter.

'Gopi' Handoo, who had been our Security Chief for nearly ten years, was appointed by Nehru as Inspector General of Police, Border Forces, in November 1960, and located at Bombay. During the next six months or so, he developed important contacts in Goa and collected invaluable information. In fact he soon became an authority on Goan affairs. As the year 1961 drew on, we received reports of considerable repression by the Portuguese of Goan nationalist leaders who were waging a political struggle with their backs to the wall.

On or about 23 October 1961, Nehru, on his way to UK and USA made a public speech at Bombay in which he

41 I heard Nehru speaking spiritedly from the ramparts of the Red Fort, Delhi, in 1955 on the Independence Day, exhorting half a million people (who had gathered on the occasion to liberate Goa).

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said words to the following effect :

(*a*) We had asked the Portuguese many times to negotiate with us about Goa and solve the problem peacefully but they had insulted us each time.

(*b*) We, therefore, did not now deny the right to ourselves to take action in Goa if Portuguese atrocities against the Goan nationalists did *not* stop and they did not vacate our territory peacefully.

(*c*) He was proceeding abroad and would make no secret of this last attempt on his part to negotiate with the Portuguese.

(*d*) We had proved to the world in more than one way that we did not differentiate between Goans and Indians both of whom were nationals of this country with equal rights. One proof was that to day we had one Roman Catholic Cardinal in Bombay itself and five out of seven Bishops in India were Goans. On the other hand, the Portuguese had never appointed a single Goan as Bishop in Goa.

On 28 October 1961, Lt Gen J. N. Chaudhuri and I travelled back from the Armoured Corps Conference at Ahmednagar to Poona together. He asked me then that in the event of operations against Goa, *I should put in a good word in the right quarters* that he should be personally entrusted with this responsibility (which he should not share with anyone else). When I repeated this conversation to my Chief, Thapar, on returning to Delhi, he was amused.

On 24 November, I was summoned to a meeting by the Defence Minister in his room along with the three Service Chiefs and Handoo. Menon told us he had received the following information :[42]

(*a*) The annual SEATO Naval Exercises were being held about 150 miles off the Marmagoa harbour in the Arabian Sea from 18 to 25 November. Pakistani, British, American, Turkish and Iranian vessels were taking part in this exercise. Salazaar thought that by creating an incident whilst these exercises were being held not far from Goa, he would

42 He collected this information from various sources including the Intelligence Bureau and also from Handoo.

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be able to test the USA/UK/Pakistan reactions. The Portuguese fired at our merchant ship *Sabarmati* on 18 November from the Anjadiv Island without any provocation whilst it was going from Bombay to Cochin along our coast, wounding one of its engineers in the eye. This incident had taken place in the 800 yard-wide channel which divides our harbour of Karwar and the Portuguese island of Anjadiv between which our ships always plied (being our own territorial waters).

(b) Finding that India did not react to this incident, the Portuguese took further courage and killed in cold blood an Indian fisherman named Raja Ram on 21 November (?) 1961, who was fishing in the same channel. This news went to Bombay first and reached Delhi leisurely on the 24th.

Salazaar, the Portuguese Prime Minister, was not sure whether in a crisis between India and his country, USA and UK would come to his help. He had hoped (in vain) that the former under the Roman Catholic Kennedy and the latter, a trusted ally, under the Conservative Macmillan, would oblige.

The Portuguese hoped that if India did react militarily against Goa, it would take her several weeks to mount and execute an operation, during which period some ships from the SEATO Exercise would come either to their assistance or as mediators. The Portuguese would, in any case, place this issue before the UN, making heavy weather of the threatened armed invasion of Goa by India and have a ban imposed, preventing us from taking military action against their Empire in India.

It was suggested in our meeting that as an act of reprisal, we should capture the Anjadiv Island[43]. Handoo, however, warned that this was just what the Portuguese hoped we would do, to enable them to approach the UN and that hence, whilst we were at it, he suggested we might as well

43 A mere $1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ mile in area.

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go for all the Portuguese enclaves in India.

After some discussion, however, it was decided that for the present, we should wait and see and take no action other than asking the Indian Navy to patrol our waters from Bombay to Cochin via Karwar and only show the flag, in order to restore confidence of our nationals generally and of the fishermen in the vicinity of Karwar in particular. These poor men were in panic and did not go out to fish any more, which was their means of livelihood.

Air Marshal Engineer, the Air Chief, reported that when one of our Canberras, flying at a speed of about 600 miles per hour, was carrying out a certain mission, on our side of the border its pilot saw on his radar screen, that he was being chased by a supersonic jet, flying at about twice the speed of our Canberra, from which he broke contact at once and returned to base. This account baffled us all. Whose plane could it be, with a mach-2 speed (about 1,500 miles per hour)? Did the Portuguese keep such planes in Dabolim/Goa? Or, were they being assisted in the air by one of their allies? If so, who was this ally? These questions, however, remained unanswered.

We then received reports from Handoo that the Portuguese had begun firing at many of our patrols on our side of the border during the next few days, at Terekhol Island, at Sawantwadi and in the jungle area near Dandeli, where Portuguese ammunition was found in our territory and collected by the Police. Their repressive measures against Goan nationalist elements went from bad to worse. Handoo sent us some interesting photographs.

We also received reliable information that Pakistan proposed exploiting this situation. They concentrated their forces threateningly along our Punjab borders. They were holding a big exercise which was significantly prolonged to coincide with this period. Families of their officers and other ranks were evacuated from certain areas. Leave to their service personnel was cancelled. These reports con-

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vinced us of a collusion between Portugal and Pakistan against us. Menon informed Nehru of all these developments. It was the desire of both Nehru and Menon to solve the problem of Goa peacefully. But the Portuguese were forcing their hands.

After considering the recent developments and with Nehru's concurrence, Menon ordered the Service Chiefs in a meeting on 28 November to make plans for military action against the Portuguese enclaves in India as a grave situation had now arisen. The three Chiefs then discussed the various pros and cons of the situation.

Handoo suggested we should act swiftly in the matter as any delay would permit the Portuguese to freeze our efforts through the UN. He had told us that the Portuguese forces in Goa numbered approximately 4,500 (3,000 Portuguese and 1,500 Goans) and about 1,500 at Diu and Daman, making a total of 6,000. They were supported by armoured cars, machine guns and some artillery. (On entering the areas later, we found that these estimates were reasonably accurate.) We, therefore, decided to concentrate a force consisting of two Brigades from an Infantry Division, a Parachute Brigade and some other infantry, armour, artillery and engineer units in support for this operation in the vicinity of Belgaum and elsewhere in this theatre. A little later, we decided to concentrate the Armoured Division from somewhere in the heart of India to our North Western Borders about the same time, to protect ourselves against the threat of Pakistan forces in that area.

It had been decided to take this step only after grave provocations. We wanted the Portuguese to know that on the issue of our territorial rights on Goa, we meant business and would be prepared to make no compromise. If they had any war-like intentions to retain our territory and provoked us any further, we had made up our mind to expel them from our soil by all means at our disposal.

I asked the higher authorities the date by which we had

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to concentrate our forces. When a fortnight was suggested to me by Thapar as a target, a period within which I agreed to carry out this task, Lt Gen Chaudhuri said it could never be done within that time.

I came back from this fateful meeting with a sense of purpose. We were at long last redeeming another pledge and liberating the last bit of our territory from foreign yoke.

My Director of Operations, Brigadier Palit and I agreed upon our military action against Goa being named as 'Vijay' (Victory). When this code name was approved by the Army Chief and the Government, we informed Chaudhuri accordingly.

Maj Gen 'Unni' Candeth was appointed the Divisional Commander. In the chain of command, he was to be under Chaudhuri as the latter happened to be the next superior formation commander in that area. Chaudhuri, in turn, was under command of Thapar, who was the Army Chief. *No single individual could claim credit for this operation.* It was a co-operative effort of Commanders and the Staff. It was India pitted against Portugal. Government were being assisted in this operation by the three Service Chiefs, who alone were running this show.

Based on our directive, Chaudhuri had submitted to us his detailed operational plan on which Palit made a number of intelligent comments. I started concentrating men and material to meet the threat from both Pakistan and Portugal from 2 December onwards. The coordination of these criss-cross moves was a complicated affair. They involved long journeys and a number of problems. I deputed my Deputy, Maj Gen J. S. Dhillon, to ensure the execution of my orders meticulously. This he did effectively and with dedication.

Handoo had warned me that we would find many bridges and roads demolished in Goa and so I moved the maximum possible Engineer resources to Belgaum from all over India to ensure that we could repair the various impediments

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without losing much time.

Chaudhuri came to see me in my office, in the presence of Handoo, whilst these moves were taking place. He asked why we were appointing a Divisional Commander[44] to carry out these operations as he felt he himself was perfectly capable of discharging this duty. I told him half-jestingly that we required a Divisional Commander who could actually fight. He then reiterated what he had told me before; that he feared this move would never be completed by 11 December as I had promised; that as he had seen 'much war', he knew that such moves took time. I found it difficult to stomach this sermon. I told him if he knew war, so did many others who should not be taught their jobs. I had assured him and the Government (despite his astute prophecies) that I would position all the essential fighting machinery around Belgaum by 11 December and I therefore told him again that there need be no doubt in his mind that anything could prevent me from doing so. Chaudhuri then hastily withdrew from my room and Handoo shook me by the hand.

I was determined that these moves were carried out within the shortest possible time to give the enemy the minimum notice. I, therefore, asked Karnail Singh, Chairman, Railway Board, if he could let military special trains have a clear run on their dash towards Belgaum until our operational traffic was clear, increasing their speeds, changing their engines, shortening their halts and taking a few other steps. Being a man of action, he fully co-operated in this effort, with the result that all our trains moved without a hitch and at great speed towards their destination[45] As a result, I was able to complete the concentration

44 Candeth reported to him for duty on 5 December as Commander 17 Division.

45 As civilian traffic was stopped on the main line towards Belgaum during this critical period (except Mail trains which had to wait for military specials),

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of our forces and essential equipment and stores weighing over 10,000 tons by the stipulated date.[46] (Unessential material kept pouring in even later.)

In these moves, Lt Gen Kochhar, the Quartermaster General, Brigadier Satarawala, my Director of staff Duties, Brigadier Pachnanda, the Director of Movements and Shiv Kishore, the Railway Liaison Officer, did excellent work.

We had many shortages in men and material, (as we were to have, once again, next year against the Chinese). Some of them were made up by milking units not taking part in this operation and by local purchase. But others persisted. (Luckily, however, we had a weak enemy against us this time.) We remained short—in less than one division —of 2,000 batteries, 14,000 field dressings, nearly ninety wireless sets, over hundred miles of communication cable, 490 rifles, 240 sten carbines, and some pieces of artillery, not to speak of major deficiencies in mine detectors and markers. One battalion was short of 400 pairs of foot-wear and went into battle in P.T. shoes.

Many preliminary preparations were made during the next few days. Everyone's morale was high as they knew they were there for a good cause. The Portuguese continued their provocations, e.g. political repression of our nationals, by their military preparations and flirting with Powers not friendly to us. Some actions on the part of Pakistan appeared clearly to be in conjunction with the Portuguese.

There must have been some quislings in our Government who were keeping the Portuguese informed of our impor-

some important civilians were stranded. They naturally raised a howl to Nehru in protest and I was soon on the mat. Nehru asked me if I knew anything about this complaint. I confessed that this step had been taken at my instance and told him I had been compelled to do so in order to expedite operational moves in the interests of our country. Nehru asked me if I had done this with Government's authority. I had not. He fumed for a minute and then calmed down.

46 In a moment of weakness, Chaudhuri was forced to admit (in the presence of another officer) that I had worked like a human dynamo in moving all the men and material during these operations.

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tant secrets. The news of our 'D' Day leaked out to Salazaar who in his last telegram to Governor General D'Silva at Goa on the 13th warned that India would attack Goa on the 15 December (which was correct as on 13th). This leakage must have taken place from one of our high Government sources in Delhi. Later the 'D' day was changed to 18 December. Thanks to our lack of security, some officers and other ranks had divulged the 'D' day in their private mail, some of which was intercepted by the Army Headquarters censors.

A South American Ambassador lodged a protest on behalf of Portugal with our Foreign Office. Nehru received messages from President Kennedy and the British Prime Minister through the American and British envoys respectively conveying the concern of their Government in this matter. He also received a similar message from U Thant, the UN Secretary-General. The gist of all these messages was that the world saw Nehru as the apostle of peace and as such his military action against Goa would be considered incompatible with his professions. They asked Nehru to observe moderation and try to solve this problem without resorting to force. Nothing concrete, of course, had been done in the past by any of them to get this question settled honourably for us nor would these countries, if placed in similar circumstances, have practised themselves what they were preaching to us. Nevertheless, these communications had a pronounced effect on Nehru who was always sensitive to foreign comment. U Thant's letter had the maximum impact on him. It was not only a message from the head of a world body like the UN but also from a distinguished fellow Asian. In order to reconsider the whole matter, Nehru had postponed the 'D' Day for this operation twice.

I do not know how often Nehru saw Krishna Menon, General Thapar or any one else during this dilemma but he sent for me at this stage and told me that on second thoughts he was not at all happy with his decision to take armed

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action against Goa. He also mentioned the representations he had received on the subject from abroad. He said he found it difficult to ignore such strong world opinion on this issue and asked me what I thought the repercussions would be if this operation was called off. I replied that millions of people had been worked up in the country over several years; their patriotism was whipped up and they were now expecting us to redeem a pledge which he had often given to the nation in his public utterances. The armed forces were looking forward to being instrumental in carrying out this pledge. We had already postponed the 'D' Day twice. If we did so again or cancelled the present orders to the troops altogether, it would affect their morale adversely. They would deride this decision and—due to this vascillation on the part of Government and Nehru—think poorly of our military and political leadership. Above all, I said, the country would think we had let them down on an issue which was so dear to them. In any case, this was a domestic issue and we were not invading another country. No foreigners had any right to interfere. When we gave similar advice in their domestic issues, it was deeply resented by them. I, therefore, suggested that we should ignore foreign advice in a matter which we had fully considered and in which we had taken a firm decision.

Nehru paced up and down in his room, took a few puffs at his cigarette and appeared to be undecided. Whilst his people expected him to take stern action in this matter, he was worried that many important countries in the world disapproved this step. Moreover, he personally disliked using force to solve any problem. He was in a difficult position, as heads of Government usually are, on whom rests the weight of heavy responsibility. After thinking for a while, Nehru reluctantly agreed that we should go ahead with our present orders. He was perhaps finally swayed to take this decision because he realized his people expected him to liberate Goa. He thought that if he failed to act on

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this occasion, both the people and the armed forces might lose faith in him.

I had invited Galbraith, the American Ambassador, and Gore-Booth, the British High Commissioner, to a dinner in my house on the 18th. In view of the above decision, I hastily cancelled this engagement a day before. I presume the American and the British envoys must have guessed the reason.

A tense atmosphere prevailed in the country. All sorts of fantastic rumours were afloat. But the troops were on their toes and waited eagerly to strike the enemy on the 18th.

I treated this as a nistoric occasion. Having had the good fortune to participate in planning this operation with others at Delhi, I was anxious that I should take part in its execution if possible. Thapar agreed for me to do so. I flew to Belgaum on the 17th, where I met Lt Gen J. N. Chaudhuri. When he heard that I proposed marching with our advancing forces to Goa, he said that as the local Commander, he did not consider it necessary for me to do so. I cited to him many instances of senior army generals in other campaigns accompanying leading troops in operations, as I proposed to do. When I invited him to keep me company in this march, he said, he did not see why he should slog (this short distance?) on his flat feet when he could fly in a helicopter on to our objectives *once they were captured.* Handoo was sitting not far from where this conversation was going on between me and Chaudhuri. I thought there was no point in prolonging this discussion and hence, disregarding what Chaudhuri was saying, I hopped a lift in the 'otter' which had just landed nearby and was soon at the Divisional Headquarters several miles ahead.

We mounted a three-pronged attack on Goa; from the North, South and East, with our Navy dealing with the West. I decided to go along the main body advancing from the East. After meeting Candeth, a cool and competent commander, I drove in a jeep to Brigade Headquarters

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where I met Brigadier Kalwant Singh[47] whom I knew well. Without losing much time, Kalwant Singh and I moved forward to the headquarters of a Sikh Battalion in the advance guard. It was past midnight by now and they had assembled at their start line. A tense air of expectancy and a complete silence prevailed in the pre-dawn darkness. Everyone talked in hushed whispers or made only gestures lest they were heard. Torches were shielded. Commanders wore white arm bands to denote who they were. We looked at our watches for the H hour and wondered if it would be a walk over or there would be some battle. Just after the first waves of the vanguard had moved forward, I along with Brigadier Kalwant Singh and my trusted companions from Delhi, Lt Col Sanjeev Rao and Major Malhotra, went ahead. The air had a little nip in it. It seemed like a brisk morning walk except that death seemed to lurk around the corner.

The battalion went virtually double-marching forward. We found scattered mines and destroyed bridges and culverts on our way. This prevented us from bringing up our vehicles and artillery till we removed the obstacles or repaired the bridges and roads. We passed precariously through these impediments. Men were self-contained in regard to essential ammunition and food and their tails were up. We kept marching as fast as we could, mines or no mines. By 10.00 hours we were in a town called Mollem which lay deserted, showing signs that its occupants and troops had left post-haste and in panic. Pots were still boiling on ovens, suit-cases were lying half open, crumpled night clothes and other sundry articles were littered all over. We also captured a big dump of explosives intact.

We occupied another town by the name of Collem a little later. There were scenes of great enthusiasm on the part of the local population who were jubilant at being liberated. We met a rich friendly Goan, Fernandes by

47 He did well in this operation but was superseded for promotion soon after.

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name, who offered us his jeep and three trucks for our use, which we welcomed. Brigadier Kalwant Singh and I, along with our men then sped in these trucks along the road as the enemy was on the run. This was a calculated risk in an unusual situation in which speed was urgent.

Brigadier Sagat Singh, Commander of the Parachute Brigade, had sent a wireless message to Chaudhuri that he had reached Benastarim and Betim on the 18th evening (good going!) and that there was still some desultory firing going on in Panjim but that they hoped to be there soon. This made Chaudhuri think the fighting was virtually over. When he had asked Army Headquarters earlier as to who should take the surrender from the Portuguese, Thapar, with the concurrence of Government, had conveyed to him that Maj Gen Candeth, who was bearing the brunt of this episode, should have the honour of doing so.

Chaudhuri hastily flew in a helicopter to Benastarim and took with him B. N. Mullick and Maj Gen Dunn, his Principal Staff Officer. He, however, left behind Handoo, although the latter was near at hand at the time. This was a pity. It would have been in the fitness of things if Chaudhuri had asked Handoo to accompany him on this important trip. After all, Handoo and Chaudhuri had worked together on the Goa episode for so long and till now. Chaudhuri took this trip ostensibly to see how his forward troops were doing but in the hope of taking the surrender from the Portuguese contrary to orders from Delhi. He waited whilst odd shots were still flying around Panjim and entered that town only after it fell[48]. Chaudhuri had reached there too late as the Portuguese Governor General, D' Silva, who could give him the surrender, had already fled to Vasco Da Gama the night before. He heard that Colasso, the Portuguese Secretary General, was still in Panjim. He went to his bungalow and demanded a surrender from him

48 He sent a souvenir to Nehru direct from Panjim over the heads of Thapar and Menon, much to their annoyance.

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instead. Colasso rightly said he was not entitled to give a military surrender. He added, however, that for this purpose, Chaudhuri should proceed to Vasco Da Gama where he would find their Governor General. As a minor battle was in progress in the vicinity of Vasco Da Gama, Chaudhuri returned to his base in Belgaum without being able to take the surrender.

As irony would have it, only a few hours later, Brigadier Kalwant Singh, Commander, 63 Brigade, sent a wireless message to Chaudhuri that the Portuguese Governor General, D'Silva,[49] had driven up to him in a jeep with a white flag and offered a political surrender at Vasco Da Gama. Handoo advised that we should only accept an unconditional and total (not a limited) surrender. And this is what Kalwant was told to do.

When Handoo met the Portuguese Governor General a few days later, the latter made the following statements:

(a) He never expected that India would take military action.

(b) When military action was taken, he never thought we would get through so soon and cross the five rivers so swiftly after he had personally supervised the destruction of these bridges (being a Sapper).

(c) He never imagined that his troops would put up such feeble resistance and that there were so many traitors among his 'subjects'.

(d) If we had moved 'normally', taking about three days at the border and about ten days to a fortnight along the water obstacles, he would have had the opportunity, in this interval, of appealing to the UN to freeze our progress through a cease-fire order.

The Air Force and the Navy gave us excellent support throughout except in one instance where they made an

49 He and many other Portuguese officials had congregated in Vasco Da Gama hoping to escape to Portugal in their warship the *Albuquerque* never expecting that the Indian Navy would put it out of action.

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error of judgement. When an air strike was called to help the advance of 2 Sikh Light Infantry to Mapuca, they mistook the target and bombed our own gun positions, fortunately causing little damage.

The press were not allowed by Government to accompany our advancing armies. This was a mistake. There was nothing for us to hide. They, therefore, sent despatches sitting at Belgaum which in some cases were not accurate[50]. I understand some enterprising foreign correspondents entered Goa (from which side?) before our advance began.

The Goans in our Armed Forces and other Services played a brave and significant role, during these operations. For instance, despite the fact that his uncle, Doctor Rossario d'Pinto, was the Mayor of Mapuca, Air Vice Marshal Pinto gallantly led the first aerial attack on Goa and destroyed the wireless transmitter at Dambolim (and might well have killed some of his kith and kin).

The Portuguese had shown no will to fight. They had made some sort of stand at Diu and Daman but by and large had bolted from the battle. The speed with which we had firstly concentrated our men and material and later the pace at which our troops moved on foot was remarkable. The local population helped our forces whom they were glad to see. Within thirty-six hours, our troops won back our territories from the Portuguese after 451 years.

We treated all Portuguese prisoners (called detenus by us) with consideration. Their Governor General and his wife were lodged comfortably and allowed all courtesies which went with their rank. His wife was repatriated as she was not very well. We treated their prisoners kindly, allowing them more comfort and consideration than our own troops, providing them with excellent food, shelter and amenities. Some of them were allowed to sleep under cover,

50 When, in fact, no artillery was ever used in this operation, one correspondent wrote by a flight of his imagination, 'Guns were zooming and horizons were lighted...'

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whilst our men who had defeated them were sleeping under the sky. This was the height of 'chivalry' on our part. The International Red Cross saw these arrangements. I addressed a large collection of Portuguese prisoners and asked them what more we could do for them. Among the few points they made, they wanted certain privileges about their mail which we promptly promised to provide.

When I came back to Delhi, I found everyone was full of praise for the army, the police and the Government for rising to the occasion and because things had gone without a hitch.

A few days later, I went back to Goa with a high-powered party of officials by sea. Government had decided to establish a military administration in Goa to begin with and Candeth had been appointed as the Military Governor—a job in which he did extremely well—with Handoo as his Special Adviser. He now lived in the same 'palace' from where the Portuguese Governor-General once ruled this colony. Instead of the Portuguese flag over this building, now flew the Indian tri-colour. As we stepped in this huge structure, a well-known Goan nationalist who had struggled long against the Portuguese in Goa came to see Handoo. He first kissed the floor of this palace sentimentally as it was Indian territory now. He then related to Handoo and me stirring tales of his suffering in the last few years in Goa and ended up by saying that now that his dream had been fulfilled and Goa was free, he was leaving this place, as he had no more part to play and would never come back again.

In the assumption of civilian responsibilities, our administrators and the Police had done well. The Railway communications were developed speedily. Finally, the Army had done their duty creditably.

There were mixed reactions in the world to our action in Goa. Some were good, others adverse. It has been suggested in certain quarters that India had provoked various inci-

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dents to justify her military action in Goa. On the contrary, it was Portugal who had provoked two incidents on 18 and 21 November 1961 respectively, wounding and killing our nationals in order to synchronize them with the SEATO Naval Exercises. Our critics also forgot the fact that we were only recovering a part of our own territory from a foreign power who had no right to be there.

There are many who have said that Menon had staged this operation with an eye on the elections at Bombay which were to follow soon and from where he was contesting a seat. I can categorically say this was not true. He took all decisions in this episode with the knowledge and concurrence of Nehru and only when compelled to do so by force of circumstances.

Our Government had vacillated in taking determined action in respect of Goa and eventually acted only when pressed hard. Their attitude in dealing with our border problems as a whole was also indecisive. For example, take the case of Kashmir, which had given us sleepless nights since 1947. A border state is, at the best of times, a tricky affair and Kashmir is particularly so.

It is not enough for us to say that *(a)* Kashmir is not negotiable and is an integral part of India (like Madras, Uttar Pradesh or Rajasthan); and *(b)* there is no Kashmir problem.

In fact we fought shy of facing facts in Kashmir. Even after prolonged mismanagement of affairs, which had prevailed in this State, we did not send the cream of dedicated, competent and honest administrators from other parts of India, incapable of being subverted to the generous local hospitality, who could set things right in Kashmir. We shelved decisions on many matters in that province for years on end, as we were afraid of repercussions. This attitude helped no one following a policy of drift all along while the situation required firm handling. Kashmir has

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been the main cause of friction between India and Pakistan. Yet, we hoped that affairs in Kashmir would somehow sort themselves out in time. Such miracles happen rarely.

Despite Sheikh Abdullah's political background in the past, we built him up first, arrested him in 1953, kept him under detention and released him in 1958, re-arrested him a few months later, allowed his trial to drag on for years[51]. This was nothing but vacillation.

We have not implemented our policies in Kashmir vigorously. Till this is done, we will continue to have trouble there.

Having worked with Nehru so closely, I must give an assessment of our first Prime Minister and the architect of democratic India at this stage. Nehru had many qualities rarely seen in man. There was hardly another man as free from fear and hatred as he. I admired him as a peerless patriot. Many statesmen, thinkers, and journalists all over the world have already written copiously on his merits. I will, therefore, devote some space below in giving a resume of only the frailties of his character which he developed, specially after he assumed power in India and their possible explanation.

If Nehru was at times egoistic and vain, it was because a series of events in his life had fanned his ego from his early youth. He was the only son of a brilliant, rich, indulgent and successful father—Motilal Nehru—a prince among men and a towering personality—who was blind to many of Jawaharlal's faults and thought his son could do no wrong. This pampering naturally gave Jawaharlal a feeling of self-importance. He was justly proud of the fact that his father (who overshadowed him in many ways) thought so well of him.

When Jawaharlal joined the Congress, he came under

51 He was released again in 1964 only to be re-arrested in 1965 and kept under detention since, without trial.

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the hypnotic influence of Gandhi and began to make many sacrifices and contributions in the service of his country. When Motilal was drawn into the fold of the Congress, deeply moved by the dedicated work of his son, (as did other members of his family[52]) Jawaharlal took this as a personal triumph. To have won over his aristocratic and renowned father to the 'fraternity' and later to be named by Gandhi as his successor to the Congress 'throne' tickled Nehru's ego further.

In 1947, when India attained Independence Nehru stood as the great and unquestioned leader of the people, second only to Gandhi. He had endeared himself to the masses who took him as their romantic hero—a symbol of sacrifice, representing the oppressed millions. He therefore derived infinite strength from this popularity and thought he could win over the whole world and that no one could stand up to him.

During a Congress Session, he shouted through a microphone at an unruly crowd, amidst the highlights of his party: 'Ladies and Gentlemen, I must ask you to do as you are told. I will walk through your ranks from the dais to the end of where you sit and come back to the dais again. Make way for me, don't move and keep quiet. If anyone moves or talks, I will go away from here.' There was pin-drop silence. Nehru did what he said and no one moved or talked. The Congress dignitaries present at this meeting were duly impressed. Nehru felt boundless self-confidence at the hold he had on the crowds whom he thought he could always control and sway which delighted his friends and disturbed his opponents.

At another Congress Session he drove out to various functions each morning through a specified route where vast crowds used to line up to catch a glimpse of him. One day an impediment caused an unexpected traffic block on

52 He was fond of the members of his family but fondest of his daughter Indira.

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this path and so the police were compelled to make a detour, diverting Nehru through a deserted route. When Nehru saw his car going away from the throngs, he shouted at Gopi Handoo,[53] who was with him in the car, to stop at once. He then walked all the way to the waving, screaming multitude of men and women who stood waiting for him. That night, after a bath and just before dinner, he told Gopi never to ignore crowds again so far as he was concerned. Gopi said that these crowds were all very well but when he had got mixed up with them that morning, his (Gopi's) pocket was picked and he had lost all the money he carried as also his return air ticket! When he heard this story, Nehru laughed his sides out.

Nehru did not ignore his public relations. Once he was inspecting a stage from where he had to speak during a Congress Session. He gave instructions to those around him to change its height, adjust its lights and was going into other minor details when one of them[54] remarked that the speaker's dais would soon be like a theatre stage. He snapped in a temper: 'That is right. It *would* be like a stage. I am the prima donna and have to dance on this stage all day tomorrow. . . !'

Nehru had his blind spots. If he patronized men of great merit including notable scientists, artists, and sportsmen, he at the same time, had in his ranks mediocrities and second-rate individuals who lacked in personality, character and competence. If he found a colleague inefficient, he was reluctant[55] to get rid of him. When Nehru heard any

53 His Security Chief.

54 Gopi Handoo.

55 When I once asked him why he did not take some action in matters like this, he explained by giving the instance of a worm. He said you sometimes found that this insect was crawling up your leg. You stamped your foot once or twice to shake it off. After a time you found it was crawling up your leg once more. This time, you let it do so as you could not be bothered stamping your feet time and again. . . .

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allegation being levelled against an important public figure, his first reaction was as if he disbelieved and was amazed that anyone should be *accused* at all. (In reality he evaded getting involved in awkward situations.) He would then be averse to taking strong action against such a man. I asked him on a particular occasion why he tolerated incompetent or dishonest people, or bore with such problems as slums and beggars. Why, I asked, did he not deal with them all with a strong hand? What he said in reply is given in the paragraph below.

He explained at length that before he became Prime Minister, he also thought he could work wonders with problems stated above but when he came face to face with them in practice and saw their real magnitude, he modified his outlook. He said our people had acquired many of their shortcomings during the period they had remained under foreign rule. We had lived with these weaknesses for long. What we needed was an awakening, a sense of responsibility, a unity of purpose and cohesion among us. All this would take time. There was no short-cut. We should not try to eradicate our weaknesses by stringent methods which were double-edged weapons. They might yield good results to begin with, but usually led to discontent and disruption, specially in a growing nation. Moreover, strong methods smacked of totalitarianism which could never succeed among a simple and a democratic people like us. We should try and improve ourselves by setting a high personal example which others could emulate. Whatever we do, he said, we must treat our countrymen extremely gently and bring them up as if they were little children. He said we were awakening from our long slumber in which we had fallen during colonial rule and hence we must hasten slowly. (Though Nehru was right in what he said, theoretically speaking, he should, however, have taken stern action when necessary, in practice.)

There is, however, another analysis which can explain

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Nehru's reluctance to take people to task. When he formed the interim Government in 1946, his prestige was at its highest and he enjoyed tremendous support from his new team of colleagues and others generally. He, therefore, decentralized his power and gave attention mainly to international affairs or internal matters affecting high policy. At this stage, Sardar Patel—with whom he did not always see eye to eye—was a great source of strength to him, and as Deputy Prime Minister, looked after the integration of the states and other internal problems with outstanding ability and whose removal by death was a great blow to him. Nehru continued to give his colleagues a free hand but in this process found that many of the concerned individuals were petty minded, incompetent, communal and corrupt and began misusing their newly acquired power. They, therefore, brought Nehru much discredit. When he tried to put matters right and in some cases attempted to revert their power to himself, they began indulging in intrigue and disloyalty to him. Nehru thus became disillusioned in his comrades on whom he had relied so much. He felt let down by these men around him and became cynical. He began to see many snags to a problem and was driven to accommodate all sorts of viewpoints—and to adjust his own—in order to ensure a smooth running of his administration (an aim which was seldom, if ever, achieved).

With the death of his trusted comrades such as Azad, Kidwai, B. C. Roy, Pant and some others, few were left who could advise Nehru. Not knowing on whom to rely, he began losing confidence in himself. He, therefore, found it necessary to appease those around him, fighting shy of taking a firm position. He became unduly apprehensive of the possible repercussions which his actions might have on certain groups and communities. He was afraid of hurting the susceptibilities of the Congress Party, the Opposition and many others. In this process in his sense to administer human affairs, he got mixed up with extraneous considera-

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tions, vacillated, became indecisive and made many mistakes as a result.

Although Nehru had a short temper, his anger subsided quickly. He also had a keen sense of humour.[56] Nehru lost his patience or took the opposite view in a discussion more with those he knew well than others. If they persisted, he took some note but usually ignored what they said thinking he could afford to take such liberty with them safely.

Nehru set a high standard of personal conduct and was held in awe and reverence. He wielded great power which he seldom used. His colleagues looked up to him for some lead before they acted themselves. In his presence they showed enthusiasm, loyalty and appeared to be working in a team. In actual fact, however, most of them were disunited, vague in their objectives and incoherent. They were merely a reflection of their party and the country, which had many problems and complexities of ideologies. They were only united during occasional emergencies but as a rule they remained divided. Nehru failed to ensure that they led the country instead of merely reflecting it. He never trained a set of bright and promising individuals from whom the country could draw his successor. In other words, he failed to create a second line of leadership. He always said leaders were not selected in advance but were thrown up in emergencies. Admittedly, democracies cannot appoint successors to the heads of their government, as if it was a hereditary post, but surely we cannot also trust chance in such matters.

He knew the theoretical solutions of most problems but did not have the tenacity to see them translated into practice. He laid down sound policies on many matters but was unable to ensure their strict implementation. Many of his

56 For instance, when someone asked him once why he often stood on his head, he replied that since the world was upside-down, he wanted to get its correct perspective.

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lieutenants exploited this chink in his armour and refrained from carrying out fully what he had asked to be done in several fields. When detected, persons responsible for such lapses quoted lame excuses in their defence and remained unpunished. These tendencies, therefore, continued to persist, to our disadvantage and sometime discredit. Nehru was a great man but not a great administrator.[57]

Nehru had a habit of expressing an opinion publicly on most major domestic and international issues. This often rubbed many people the wrong way and earned him unpopularity in certain circles. Because of these frequent public utterances, some of his own actions appeared at variance with his opinions. When he adversely commented on important issues in the world such as Cuba, Suez, events in the Congo, the French occupations in Viet Nam and Algiers, as also the American and British foreign policies in Asia, he aroused irritation in many quarters which silence or tact on his part could have avoided. It is because Nehru criticized these powers, perhaps for good reasons, that they in turn took us to task on the Kashmir issue, on our earlier relations with China, and our troubles with the Nagas (The moment a question becomes controversial, it is then a matter of tit-for-tat).

He spent his energies in many extraneous activities. He saw several people he need not have seen and attended to trivial activities which he could have ignored, amidst his profound commitments. Consequently, he was dead-beat by dinner time, though at breakfast he would often say: 'I am wound up now and will be unwound all day.' It was therefore not infrequent to see him doze off after meals in the middle of an important conversation. I remember many such instances. Soon after coming into Government in

57 Nehru was served well by many and let down by some others. Among the former came S. P. Khanna, Seshan and Kapur who were on his personal staff and who rendered him and his household selfless and invaluable services for years on end.

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1946, he called me to his house about ten o' clock one night and was discussing with me a certain (non-military) matter. In this process he gave me a file to read. Whilst I was going through it, Nehru took a restful pose in his chair and soon fell into deep slumber. I found him do this sort of thing on many other occasions during the period 1946 to 1962 amidst discussions of some consequence (mostly after dinner) due to over-work.

Here I give some extracts from a self-analysis which Nehru had made in an article he wrote under the pen name of Chanakya headed 'The Rashtrapati' in the *Modern Review* of November 1937—ten years before he was appointed Prime Minister:

Watch him again. There is a great procession and tens of thousands of persons surround his car and cheer him in an ecstasy of abandonment. He stands on the seat of the car, balancing himself rather well, straight and seemingly tall, like a God, serene and unmoved by the seething multitude. Suddenly there is that smile again or even a merry laugh... the tension seems to break and the crowd laughs with him, not knowing what it is laughing at. He is God-like no longer but a human being claiming kinship and comradeship with the thousands who surround him and the crowd feels happy and friendly and takes him to its heart... From the Far North to Cape Comorin he has gone like some triumphant Caesar passing by, leaving a trail of glory and a legend behind him. Is it his will to power of which he speaks in his autobiography that is driving him from crowd and making him whisper to himself:

'I drew these tides of men in my hands and wrote my will across the sky in stars.' Jawaharlal is certainly not a fascist either by conviction or by temperament. He is far too much of an aristocrat for the crudity and vulgarity of fascism. (This he said in 1937 when Hitler was at the Zenith of his power.) His very face and voice tell us that:

'Private faces in public places are better and nicer than public faces in private places.' .... He must know well that there is no resting by the wayside on the path he has chosen and that even triumph itself means greater burdens. As Lawrence said to the Arabs: 'There can be no rest-houses for revolt, no dividend of joy paid out.'

Joy may not be for him but something greater than joy may be his if fate and fortune are kind—the fulfilment of a life purpose.... In this revolutionary epoch, Caesarism is always at the door, and is it not pos-

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sible that Jawaharlal might fancy himself as a Caesar? Therein lies danger for Jawaharlal and for India. For, it is not through Caesarism that India will attain freedom.... Inspite of his brave talk, Jawaharlal is obviously tired and stale and he will progressively deteriorate if he continues as President (of the Congress). He cannot rest, for he who rides a tiger cannot dismount. But we can at least prevent him from going astray and from mental deterioration under too heavy burdens and responsibilities. We have to expect good work from him in the future. Let us not spoil that and spoil him by too much adulation and praise. His conceit is already formidable. It must be checked. We want no Caesars.

The gist of the above article was that Nehru enjoyed a phenomenal popularity in India; that great burdens lay upon him; that he was tired and stale and would progressively deteriorate; that he should not be spoiled by too much adulation and praise; that his conceit was already formidable and that he was possibly a Caesar. All these points proved correct even years later except that Nehru was dynamic and a Caesar only when young but mellowed down under Gandhi's influence. On becoming Prime Minister he thrived, to begin with, on this great prestige. As time passed, however, and the problems he faced grew in number and complexities, Nehru became more and more compromising and indecisive. His reluctance to govern strongly, however, did not belittle his greatness in other fields. It can be said, in fairness to him, that he had not sought the post of Prime Minister, which had been thrust upon him. Though it was in the fitness of things that in view of his great role during our struggle for independence, Nehru should have been our foremost leader, yet his becoming our Prime Minister did *not* turn out to be an unqualified success from the point of view of administration (though it was a great success ideologically). He was an idealist and a man of great nobility—who made India a Democracy but who, instead of becoming the head of our Government, should have been appointed the head of our State. He struggled through the former role whereas he

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would have excelled in the latter. He was ideally suited for being our first citizen and would have presented a lofty image to the world as our President, reflecting the best our country could produce. (When Nehru continued to remain in harness, in later years, despite his failing health, as he thought he had promises to keep with his people, instead of being indulgent with one who had slaved all his life for them, some of his countrymen were uncharitable enough to clamour that he should abdicate. There had been others like Lenin, Roosevelt and Eisenhower who had also ailed but whose nation bore with them. Here was Nehru who had done more for his country than anyone since Ashoka or Akbar and who once had 'roses roses all his way' being slighted by his own people.)

Some of our senior army officers were in the habit of making tenacious and indiscreet remarks openly against our national leaders and extolled the erstwhile British rulers of India. They suggested, at times, that some sort of dictatorial rule was the only way to get our affairs out of the mess in which they were. (They did not realize that no regime, however, dictatorial or otherwise could ever work satisfactorily unless it was led by men of integrity, ability and decision who were not available in abundance.) They also talked loosely at various cocktail parties and other places in order to win cheap popularity with foreigners in whose presence they derided India. All that some foreign dignitary had to do was to ask some of our officers for the 'low down' on any matter and, more often than not, he was promptly obliged. Much secret information leaked [58] out in this and also in other ways and reached unauthorized groups and individuals.

58 For instance, a prominent journalist told me some years ago that a certain secret document from Nehru's office had found its way to a Foreign Establishment in Delhi. When I repeated, what I had heard, to Nehru, he found it hard to believe. When, however, he searched for this document, he found that it was, in fact, missing.

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I came to know of specific cases of anti-national and indiscreet utterances—some made in the presence of foreigners—on the part of a few senior officers. I, accordingly, brought them to the notice of my Army Chief, General P. N. Thapar, in writing, who put this matter up to Defence Minister Menon, who, in turn, reported it to the Prime Minister. Nehru, after some further investigation, passed strictures against one and a court of enquiry was held to investigate the allegations against the other. The court, despite taking exception to some aspects of his conduct, exonerated this officer. Government, however, conveyed its displeasure, with the knowledge of Nehru, to this officer. This censure was soon forgotten and he was promoted to the next higher rank by the same Government a little later.

In pursuance of the forward policy, as it was popularly referred to, and as explained earlier we had been issuing orders for the establishment of various posts both in Ladakh and NEFA. In this task B. N. Mullick and Hooja of the Home Ministry gave us invaluable data and assistance. In connection with some difficulties which GOC 33 Corps had raised, I went to Gauhati in February 1962 and held a conference attended by senior civil and military officials who were dealing with this question in NEFA. I told them why it was important for us to establish posts all along our borders and that failure on our part to do so would result in the Chinese establishing these posts instead. In view of the extreme shortage of manpower, labour, supply-dropping equipment and the inaccessibility of certain areas, many of which were not easy to identify, and unreliable maps, Lt Gen K. Umrao Singh, Commander 33 Corps, apprehended it might be difficult to fully implement this policy. After some discussion, it was agreed by all present that it was imperative in the national interests of defence to establish as many posts along our borders in

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NEFA as possible, despite our difficulties.

As NEFA, 360 x 90 miles in area, consists of high mountainous regions, especially near the Indo-Tibet border, it was not possible to operate in those areas till the advent of the summer when the snows had melted. It was in pursuance of this effort that the Commander of the 4 Infantry Division sent out various Assam Rifles parties, each accompanied by a regular army officer, to ensure that these posts were correctly established. One such party went under the guidance of Captain Mahabir Pershad, MC of 1 Sikh and established a post at Dhola in NEFA near the area of Tri-junction.[59] We established many other such posts along the Indo-Tibet border in our territory. The Chinese must have resented being forestalled and in frustration and anger provoked a combustible situation in October 1962 which I will describe later.

Prime Minister Nehru had been invited to visit USA in November 1961. Our Ambassador at Washington, B. K. Nehru, had come to Delhi a little earlier for consultations with Government. B. K. Nehru was our most successful envoy in USA since Independence. He has a tactful[60] and a winning personality with a brilliant head. He sips his tea in bed leisurely in the mornings and scans through the daily news, remaining calm and unflustered under most pressures and disposes of official matters with the greatest despatch. He is a model of dignity and independence and never toes anyone's line. Though Jawaharlal Nehru's cousin, he has never traded on this fact and has prospered in his career on sheer personal merit.

He complained to me that whereas he was doing his best to foster good relations between India and USA, as was his charter, Menon was leaving no stone unturned to undo his work. He thought Menon had every right to conduct him-

59 Where the boundaries of India, Bhutan and Tibet meet.

60 He is of course quite capable of taking a firm stand when necessary.

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self in the UN as he wished, but had no right to present a distorted image of India by his 'mental acrobatics and offensive and contemptuous behaviour'. He might have registered a few points in the UN for India, but forfeited the friendship of many countries in the process, which was neither his function nor his directive on our behalf.

B. K. Nehru and I then discussed current affairs with special reference to Defence. I told him we were woefully short of weapons and equipment, a fact with serious implications, although our Government kept stating in the Parliament and in public that our Armed Forces were strong enough to expel *any* aggressor from our territory. This claim, I said, with our antiquated and depleted weapons and logistics, at the time, was only a flight of their imagination and not a fact.

Menon's view was either not to import any military requirements or, if this step had to be taken, to do so from some specified countries, to the exclusion of others (with an odd exception). In my opinion, this was not prudent. When India was facing a critical situation, our effort should have been to strengthen ourselves by all means at our disposal, regardless of which country came to our rescue so long as it was in our national interests. We had to choose life and not death. When B. K. Nehru said USA was willing to help, in the light of my above arguments, I thought we should gladly accept her hand of friendship.

Both B. K. Nehru and I saw the Prime Minister on this subject separately. The latter virtually repeated to me (telling B. K. Nehru something on the same lines) Menon's lines of argument: that if we imported the weapons and equipment needed by the Armed Forces, we would have to spend foreign exchange of which we were already very short; so much expenditure[61] on defence would result in a major economic set-back in the country, which he could

61 A nominal sum had been sanctioned for importing a negligible portion of the equipment needed by the Forces.

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not accept. In view of these and some political considerations, he said we must mainly rely on indigenous production of weapons and equipment which was really the answer in the long run. He finally said that we must stand on our own feet as foreign countries might withdraw or modify their support to us any time.

I told Nehru I agreed with this as the ultimate solution of the problem, but the country was threatened by China and Pakistan *right then* and I was advocating importing only what we needed in the immediate future and till our own production was able to meet with our requirement. I pointed out that if we had a military reverse in the field from any aggressor, our social and economic structures would be shaken anyhow. So it was for us to decide whether we should not choose the lesser evil with greater honour. I advocated the latter path. Nehru heard what I said and replied he did not share my views. He thought that I and other Generals did not quite understand the situation. Nehru believed that apart from creating tension, neither China (nor Pakistan) was in a position to provoke a war with us as they had their problems.

When B. K. Nehru returned to America, in reply to a question in a Television interview whether he knew that Menon was unpopular in the States, he said he was aware of that fact. This reply created an uproar in some circles in India. Many thought he should not have said this about one of his Cabinet Ministers. Nehru said[62] in the Parliament that perhaps our Ambassador could have put his reply in different words. B. K. Nehru's own view was that he had only admitted what was a fact. Menon met B. K. Nehru a few weeks later and had a heated argument. He believed he was popular among the American people and cited a few

62 When President Kennedy heard this, though he sympathized with B. K. Nehru, he remarked that, as a matter of policy, all Heads of States had to support their colleagues in public, which was what Nehru had done in his Parliament.

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examples in support of his contention. B. K. Nehru replied that as the Indian Ambassador in USA, it was his business to know what was going on in that country and that unless he was deaf and blind, he knew for a fact that Menon *was* unpopular in the States.

About this time an article appeared in the *Esquire* regarding Menon entitled 'The Most Hated Diplomat' in which Cabot Lodge was reported to have said some good things about Menon. This impressed Nehru and inflated Menon.

Whilst Menon was congratulating President Kennedy on a certain speech the latter had made in the United Nations, Kennedy casually asked him to look him up sometime. Menon got in touch with his Secretary at the White House directly and fixed up an appointment, without going through our Ambassador, as is customary in such cases. The President's staff, however, asked B. K. Nehru whether he knew what Menon wanted to discuss with Kennedy. B.K. Nehru in turn asked Menon who (not wanting to confide) replied there was nothing in particular he wished to say to Kennedy. When B. K. Nehru had this conveyed to Kennedy's staff, they cancelled the appointment on the President's orders. Kennedy must have thought if Menon had nothing special to say, there was little purpose for him as the Head of a State wasting time on this interview, specially with one who was not exactly one of USA's friends. When Menon was informed of this cancellation, he was furious. But there was nothing he could do about it then.

Menon complained to Nehru when the latter reached USA on a State visit in November 1961 that our Ambassador had humiliated him deliberately. B. K. Nehru denied this allegation and told Nehru what had in fact happened. When Nehru met Kennedy soon after, he hinted that the President should, when he had the time, see Menon. The latter wanted to see Kennedy alone, but the Prime Minister insisted (as B. K. Nehru had stipulated) that he, as our Ambassador, should be present at the interview, in accord-

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ance with Protocol. Menon reluctantly agreed to this arrangement. The meeting did take place but did not help to improve Kennedy's impressions about Menon or the latter's attitude towards USA as Menon is reported to have said things which upset the President. This incident created a flutter in the diplomatic circles at Washington at the time.

During the last few years but specially since I came up to Army Headquarters in 1959, I had been visiting many of our forward posts at high altitudes in an attempt to familiarize myself with the problems of our troops. In this process I was once visiting some posts in the area of Pangong Lake near Chusul in Ladakh. As it was difficult to get across it in a boat, I went in a helicopter to see what I could of the lie of the land. We were trying to spot one of our posts near Yula and in the process went towards the Khurnak Fort and Sirijap. On our way back when the pilot was making for what looked like ours but not far from a Chinese post, and about to touch the ground, he spotted some men nearby with Mongoloid features. 'My God! We are landing in a Chinese post!' he exclaimed. But actually, on closer scrutiny, we found that though we thought they looked Chinese from a distance with their high cheek bones and slit eyes, they were in fact our own Gorkhas.

Soon after my younger daughter Chitralekha was married to Vinay Bukshi in the summer of 1962, we heard that the Chinese had almost surrounded one of our posts North of Daulet Beg Oldi in Ladakh at an altitude of about 15,000 feet. In order to confirm what happened, I flew to this post via Thoise where we were to spend a night. (The late) Air Vice-Marshal Pinto,who was to fly my helicopter to Daulet Beg Oldi, came to me at four the next morning, as we intended to make an early start, and said the weather was cloudy and that they might have to postpone the flight. After waiting for over an hour, as the clouds opened up a little and the gale grew less, we left Thoise with our fingers

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crossed in what was indifferent weather. Up to Panamik, all seemed well. But when we were flying through the Saser Brangsa gap, we ran into a furious storm. Our helicopter was tossed about and the pilot kept it on its course and under control with great difficulty. More than once it was pushed towards the rocky cliffs like a shuttle-cock with the velocity of the wind and nearly ended up in the lap of the eternal snows which lay on their peaks. Some of the mountains adjacent to Saser Brangsa rise over 23,000 feet. After spending a little time at Daulet Beg Oldi,[63] I flew to my destination (not far from the Karakoram Pass) where we made a precarious landing. This small post, located at an altitude nearly 17,000 feet, surrounded by utter desolation, was far far away from civilization. When I asked its commander, a JCO of J and K militia, for details of how the Chinese had come and gone the other day from the vicinity of his post, he naively and in bravado said that when he saw them come so close, he waved them away with a red handkerchief, on seeing which they disappeared! When we took off later from Daulet Beg Oldi, on our return I asked Air Vice Marshal Pinto, who was again piloting my helicopter, to go back home via another of our posts near the Depsang Plains. Before he agreed, he warned me: 'We may run short of fuel as the weather is foul. It is not safe to keep sightseeing at these heights and visiting posts in hostile environments indefinitely. We have had a narrow escape more than once today. I would suggest you do not tempt death too much.'

I took his advice, though not literally, and 'returned to base' after visiting the post in question, hot springs and one or two other outlandish picquets.

News came to us at the Army Headquarters that our small Gorkha Post at Galwan in Ladakh was surrounded by the Chinese on 10 July 1962. The Army Chief summoned

63 Where I had some jeeps and other equipment dropped by parachute a few weeks later for the use of our men for the first time ever.

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me to his house to discuss what steps we should take. This was a belligerent pattern of behaviour the Chinese were displaying. So far, their aggression was indicated by advancing in our territory quietly in most cases and establishing a post. Lately they had created provocative situations and had been aggressive in their behaviour. Now they had actually surrounded one of our posts. We were in a fix. If we allowed such a situation to go unchallenged, it would only encourage the Chinese. If we took some action, resulting in repercussions, we did not have the full means to cope with them. However, we thought we would take some action and accordingly our Foreign Office warned the Chinese Envoy in Delhi that if they persisted in this attitude in Ladakh (or elsewhere) we would be compelled to shoot our way out of such trouble. Secondly, we took every step to keep this post maintained by food and ammunition which could only be done by air. Reinforcing it was not a practical proposition.

The Chinese tried every tactics to intimidate our men in this post. They poured propaganda through their Nepali interpreters by loud broadcasts across to our Gorkha troops in Galwan saying that Indians were no friends of Nepal (referring to the current deterioration in the Indo-Nepali relations), whereas they said the Chinese were. Why then, they asked, were they (Gorkha troops) fighting on the side of Indians and against the Chinese? They also made menacing movements and advanced within touching distance of our men who were about forty in number, in the hope that seeing them so close in their superior all round strength, our men would capitulate. But this post held out stoutly under a spirited J.C.O. The 1/8 Gorkha detachment at Galwan was relieved a little later by that of Jat (as the former had a nerve-racking time long enough) after a hazardous manoeuvre. (The Chinese never lifted this siege till they over-ran our Galwan post along with many others in Ladakh—and NEFA—in October/November 1962.

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I made more trips to Ladakh, NEFA and other border areas, saw many of our posts perched high up in the Himalayas, some by helicopter and others by climbing up on my flat feet, and, in the process, learnt much about the difficulties under which our men were guarding their inhospitable frontiers.

As we had many operational commitments in Nagaland, NEFA and other jungle areas, I thought one of our needs was to have a Jungle Warfare School. I, therefore, helped in the establishment of such a School at Dehra Dun and placed in its command Brigadier H. S. (Kim) Yadav of the Grenadiers who had been an instructor at our Infantry School and had commanded an Infantry Battalion under me in 4 Division. He had also served with me during the Kashmir operations in 1948. He was physically tough, mentally alert and an outstanding officer. I sent him abroad on a trip during which he studied jungle and guerilla warfare techniques. I gave him a good staff, including a dedicated officer, Major (now Lt Col) T. S. Oberoi, and some other well-qualified ones. This [64] school trained infantry battalions before they went for service in Nagaland and was proving invaluable.

In 1961, the then Colonel of the Jats, Brigadier Harbhajan Singh, told me that it was the unanimous request of all the Commanding Officers of the Jat Group that I should take up their Colonelcy. I, therefore, accepted this honour. My endeavour thereafter was to do as much for the Jats as I could. I found considering their war record, the number of active battalions in their group compared unfavourably with those which other Regiments had. I, therefore, planned to raise some additional Jat Infantry Battalions, sent some of their existing ones to hazardous locations to afford them an opportunity to render good service and win laurels. I addressed 5 Jat in Srinagar just before they

64 As soon as I left the army, this school was, alas, broken up under orders of General J.N. Chaudhuri and its functions amalgamated with the Infantry School.

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were inducted into Ladakh in 1962 and made two points. Firstly I said that I had, as Colonel of their Regiment and as C.G.S., selected them for service in Ladakh, a difficult area, and therefore hoped they would give a good account of themselves and keep their flag flying; and secondly, that they had got the better of the Germans and the Japanese in the last war and should do the same against the Chinese whom they would confront in Ladakh.

I visited as many Jat units as I could in order to get to know them and for them to get familiar with me. I got a special and picturesque ceremonial uniform sanctioned for them and got them a few other considerations. I obtained sanction to have some of their officers sent to interesting jobs such as Military Attaches abroad, Instructors at some Schools of Instruction and to other staff appointments. I addressed the cadets at the Indian Military Academy extolling the distinguished record of the Jats and hoping that as many of the former would elect to serve with this illustrious group as possible. In short, I embarked upon an all-round and vigorous drive to boost up the Jats, which I thought was one of my primary functions as their Colonel.

I would now like to go back a little and recapitulate certain events. Government should give an indication of what action they anticipate on the part of our potential enemies in particular areas. They should also give clear policy directions to the Army as to what its responsibilities are concerning important areas, specially along our borders. This was not always done. The Army duly reminded the government of this and in the meantime took whatever action it could in the matter. Brigadier Palit, my Director of Military Operations, had carried out a detailed assessment of our operational requirements in the foreseeable future. We found that we were rather thin on the ground and hence wanted additional forces and some reorganizations. There

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was also a requirement for more and modern weapons, equipment and vehicles, apart from logistics. I put up detailed proposals to General P. N. Thapar, the Army Chief, who kept thinking on this subject for quite some time and then put them up to Menon piecemeal. I had asked for several additional divisions required for our existing commitments. (General J.N. Chaudhuri, after re-hashing this scheme in 1963, asked for an expansion of our Forces, which Chavan announced in the Parliament later, as an example of the new régime's 'vigorous' preparations for any eventuality.) I, the Master General of Ordnance, the Director of Military Operations and Brigadier Antia,[65] Director of Weapons & Equipment, had several discussions with each other and with the Army Chief on the subject of our various shortages. As the situation on our borders was becoming critical and in view of little response to our demands from Government, Thapar agreed that we should point out to them in writing, how grave the situation was.

I and the Master General of Ordnance prepared eight letters between November 1961 to June 1962 and got them signed by the Army Chief, Thapar, addressed to the Defence Minister on the subject of our serious shortages in the Army. We stressed, in these letters, the need for Government to allocate to us sufficient funds, including foreign exchange, for additional Forces, modernizing and making up our shortages, by imports, where necessary, in weapons and equipment and ammunition not manufactured in India but inescapable for our operational tasks. We also pointed out that these disadvantages *vis-a-vis* our possible aggressors would not permit us to function in the event of war for long.

We estimated an expenditure of 459 crores for the above and pointed out that this total did not include the cost of

65 He owed allegiance to both the C.G.S. and M.G.O.

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many other items and equipment. We put up detailed deficiencies of Engineer and Signal stores and equipment, vehicles, snow and other clothing, supply dropping equipment and emphasized that these shortages were adversely affecting our training for war. Talking of deficiency of clothing in one of these letters we pressed the need to divert some items to civil trade which our defence factories were unable to cope with in time. We conveyed to Defence Minister Menon that our Army had expanded considerably since 1959 but weapons and equipment had not kept pace with this expansion. We were in a vicious circle. On the one hand, we were required to raise additional Forces at the earliest, failing which there was a risk of our territory being occupied by our potential foes; on the other hand, our shortages in weapons, equipment and ammunition were so great that we found it impossible to equip the additional Forces we raised. If we waited for armaments to be produced in the country, the raising of our additional Forces, essential for our operational needs, would be delayed. This was a grave situation which might lead to serious consequences.

We had pointed out in more than one of these letters that certain facts were being placed before the Defence Minister as they had grave implications. In view of their importance we recommended that these matters be placed before the Defence Committee of the Cabinet so that all necessary steps could be taken. Not one of these eight letters brought back a written reply from Menon or Government. Many meetings took place with Menon but what we wanted in these letters remained mostly undone.

The scene in Delhi at this time was exasperating. The Government had many complex problems on their hands, but there were few among its Ministers who could deal with them effectively. They were living from day-to-day and were trying to solve them on an ad-hoc basis instead of approaching them systematically. They had fixed no order of priorities and were not doing the first thing first. Nor

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was there any co-ordination between the diplomatic, defence, economic and the financial matters.

So far as defence was concerned, neither Nehru nor any of his Ministers evolved a comprehensive defence policy, e.g. who were our potential enemies, what were their relative strengths *vis-a-vis* ourselves and what military and diplomatic moves and steps were necessary on our part to ensure that we did not remain at a disadvantage. In fact, we approached the question of war, which loomed large in front of us, in a haphazard manner. The functionaries of our government, *with notable exceptions,* lacked a sense of urgency. They were not working in a team nor were they giving the requisite thought and attention to this problem. Our Cabinet was living from day to day. If a new situation crept up, we were seldom prepared for it and various officials in Delhi, high and low, ran in circles and tried to evolve an answer at the last minute. In this process, we failed to gear up our war machinery for an emergency adequately.

The powers that be could not have said that they did not know the real situation. The fact of the matter was that they knew our problems but did not know their solutions. I know some Generals and others used to see the President, the Prime Minister and many politicians from time to time informally and give them the low-down about the Army or the defence matters. If the Government did not take adequate steps to solve this problem, many politicians who knew what was going on in the services should have forced the former's hands to take suitable action. There was much talk on the part of all and sundry but little concrete action. I will now portray, at some length, what was happening between the Finance and Defence Ministries in the matter mentioned above.

The Finance Ministry at various levels—with rare exceptions—split hairs over our urgent proposals and sanctioned only a fraction of what we put up for approval. They

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indulged in academic and infructuous arguments in prolonged inconclusive meetings and notings on files. They carried out unrealistic scrutiny of our cases raising many fresh points each time the file went backwards and forwards. This caused inordinate delays (affecting the defences of our country). Without being experts, these financial Pundits dabbled in technical matters and harped on the financial angle. The operational aspect appeared to them the least important of all considerations. Shortage of foreign exchange was used as an argument for not sanctioning the import of some essential equipment. Many cases were rejected even when no foreign exchange was involved. When practical reasons were given by us to these experts, they usually remained unconvinced and looked at our cases with deplorable apathy.

Even when they saw the writing on the wall, their attitude amounted to saying: 'Well, we do not believe it'. They were like a London lady whose friend told her that a giraffe was an animal with a very long neck, perhaps as long as tree. She said she refused to believe that any neck could be so long. Her friend insisted he was right and after a prolonged argument promised to take her to the zoo and show her one physically. When she actually confronted a live giraffe standing behind a cage with a neck longer than she had ever imagined an animal could have, she was struck dumb for a while but stubbornly exclaimed: 'Well, I *don't* believe what I see!'

Their attitude amounted to block, hinder and delay so that eventually most cases fell by the wayside. I would give a pertinent example. It was estimated that an expenditure of about rupees ten crores would have to be incurred to introduce the semi-automatic rifle, in lieu of our antiquated ·303. The Finance, however, turned down this important proposal after endless arguments, without considering the operational implications of their decision. It was this imprudent attitude of the financial authorities,

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spread over a long period, which resulted in the Indian Army having to fight the Chinese, both in Ladakh and also in NEFA in 1962 with inferior weapons and other handicaps.

As was generally known, there was a clash of personalities between Defence Minister Menon and Finance Minister Morarji Desai. The impasse which the Defence Ministry often reached with the finance in its various important proposals was a direct result of this friction between the two Ministers at this critical juncture. The Finance Ministry, therefore, must also bear responsibility for the Army remaining unprepared for war. Krishna Menon on seeing most of our defence proposals stalled, as indicated above, should, in the fitness of things, have brought matters to a head with the Finance or the Prime Minister or the Cabinet, specially in view of the grave consequences involved. But he refrained from doing this for some reasons best known to him (was it that he was afraid lest he upset Nehru or his other colleagues, for different reasons, if he took the action indicated by me above). This was an extraordinary state of affairs.

At this time, I thought that I should bring the question of our serious shortages, specially of weapons and equipment, to the notice of four senior and influential civil servants—Vishwanathan, M. J. Desai and Boothalingam, the Home, Foreign and Finance Secretaries respectively and Mullick, the Director of Intelligence Bureau—in the hope that they might, by the weight of the positions they held, be able to exert the requisite pressure on the powers that-be and help us in solving a problem which was so vital to us and the country. We met in the Foreign Secretary's room, where I pointed out to them at length the serious situation which prevailed in respect of our many shortages and our precarious border defence due to lack of funds. I told them that the Army in its present shape would not be able to effectively meet the various threats on India's borders and gave them a rough calculation of the expenditure

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which might have to be incurred in providing us with the necessary equipment and additional personnel.

Boothalingam said that if India had to have a defence programme of the magnitude explained, it would be necessary to slash down the expenditure at present contemplated on their next Five Year Plan and that our current foreign exchange earnings were barely sufficient to maintain our existing economy. He suggested, however, that a case should be prepared by us at the highest military level to evaluate our security needs in terms of the money required to meet them, the period over which the money would have to be spent and submitted to Government. Without losing much time, I had such a case prepared, addressed it to the Defence Minister Menon and got it signed by the Army Chief, in which our deficiencies in armaments and other respects including ammunition were examined and the need to modernize our equipment and make up its shortages emphasized. We also said in this letter how much our proposal would cost and requested that it should be placed before the Defence Committee of the Cabinet. Menon received this letter but whether he placed it before the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, only he would know. We did not hear back from him or any of his colleagues. I do not know what happened to this letter.

Apart from Krishna Menon, Morarji Desai must have been made aware of this situation through at least two—if not more—sources. Firstly, his Financial Adviser (Defence) must have kept him in touch; and, secondly, Boothalingam, his Finance Secretary, must have conveyed to him what I told him in the Foreign Secretary's room. As a responsible Minister of our Central Cabinet, if not also as the Finance Minister, he should have raised this serious matter in a Cabinet meeting, even if Krishna Menon did not keep him duly informed, so that some extraordinary steps could have been taken by the Government as a whole. Whatever the reasons for either inaction or lack of sufficient

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action on the part of one or more[66] members of our Cabinet, the Indian Army, though faced with many threats, could not get its essential demands through the mighty machinery of its Government. This state of affairs had prevailed in Delhi for a number of years.

I must clear up one more point here. Many generals have boasted, from time to time (or have been credited by others) to have pointed out the army's shortages and other requirements, with their implications, to Government at the highest level. Someone should enlighten the public and specify who these generals (or, for that matter civil servants) were, what and when did they tell the Government and at what level, whether they did so in writing and if they posed the problem in such strong and categorical terms repeatedly, as Thapar and I had done. And, what is the evidence or proof that they did so?

Here I must relate two interesting incidents (which I heard after 1962). When Admiral D. Shankar went to Japan in 1959, he happened to meet a well-informed Japanese official whom he knew. The latter, whilst discussing current affairs with him, said that whilst Japan and India were friends, it was a pity they spoke to each other with mental reservations due to which they often failed to convey important information mutually. Before he came to the point, he said there were only three countries which mattered in South East Asia: China, India and Japan. He then went on to say that a Formosan Chinese had told him (and he had other reasons to believe) that due to their increasing differences, the Chinese would soon cease to have access to oil in Russia. They would, therefore, look for this essential commodity elsewhere. He, accordingly, thought that China would press her claim for these two regions in the near future and trouble was bound

66 There were Cabinet Ministers who used to claim much inside knowledge about the defence forces. Why did they not thump the table in the Cabinet? I suppose, no one wanted to ring the bell in the cat's neck.

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to follow. The Chinese would try to subvert these areas—so important to them—and keep nibbling at them as they had their eye on the oil.[67] In the end, they would force the issue, even if it meant an armed conflict. The Chinese also wanted oil in Assam and an access to the Bay of Bengal. But as these problems would increase the areas of conflict and raise larger issues, being a patient race they would tackle them 'at a later date'.

Rear-Admiral Shankar conveyed what he had heard in Japan to his immediate superior, Maj Gen P. Narain, the Controller General of Defence Production. Shankar also wrote an exhaustive paper on the subject of Defence Production which he thought was not geared to meet the demands of the Services, specially during an emergency, in which he made the following points:

(a) No country should rely, as we were doing then, *only* on its arsenals to supply its Forces. The Defence Ministry was producing only about fifteen percent of the needs of the Armed Forces. The total industrial potential in India should, therefore, be harnessed.

(b) As it takes several years to expand an industry, we should decide to do so without any loss of time (in view of the prevailing situation).

(c) We should make up our mind about the weapons and equipment we wanted as it takes about five years or more to produce a weapon from the inception of its demand.

(d) In addition to the weapons and equipment we produce, we should keep adequate reserves (for unforeseen situations).

Menon did not agree to the basic concept that production for the needs of the Armed Forces should be also undertaken by the private sector on which idea the latter always frowned.

In 1961 the Chiefs of Staff put up to Government their requirements of armaments. To expand the Defence Production Organization in order to meet these requirements

67 Shankar had read that a British Engineer had said, as far back as 1881, that both Ladakh and NEFA were potentially rich in oil.

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about rupees one crore was needed for modernizing a rifle factory. When Menon put up a proposal to this effect to Morarji Desai, the latter turned it down on financial grounds. Yet, *after* the reverses in 1962, when Chavan asked for as much as rupees two crores in foreign exchange for modernizing one rifle factory, Morarji Desai, in changed climate, offered to sanction sufficient funds for not only one but two such factories. In this connection he sent for Joint Secretary Sarin, Maj Gen Iyappa and Rear-Admiral Shankar. During this discussion he asked Shankar [68] sarcastically: 'Where is your (meaning Menon's) much heralded Defence Production?'

'It has been all mixed up with politics, Sir,' Shankar blurted.

'What did you say?' thundered Morarji Desai.

'Nothing, Sir,' Shankar said in a whisper, 'Nothing at all.'

'Say it again, Admiral,' Desai shouted.

'I said, there was so much politics about the Defence Production, Sir,' Shankar replied reluctantly and without emotion. (Ministries of Finance and Defence were always at each other's throat due to clash of personalities and this friction resulted in the slackening of our effort in the Defence Production.)

Despite his undoubted ability, Menon neither took suitable action on the recommendations of the Service Chiefs for arming and equipping the Armed Forces suitably and making up their shortages, nor did he reply some of the important communications of the Army Chief on the question of our military preparedness. I pointed out to him the dangers of our Armed Forces remaining ill-equipped many times but in vain.

68 Admiral Shankar was the capable and conscientious Controller General of Defence Production who bore the brunt of criticism both from Menon and from the Services for different reasons. But I know how hard Shankar worked and under what difficulties.

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Though Menon understood the intricacies of diverse service equipment, his attitude in regard to indigenous production was rigid. As he thought there was little likelihood of a war in the foreseeable future, he advocated the indigenous production—a cheaper and a better way—of our weapons and equipment. His theory was that every country must be eventually self-sufficient in producing their defence material. As a long-term policy, he thought it was unwise to depend on foreign powers in this regard because during a war they can always terminate such arrangements. He felt we had to make a start in this matter some time. Why not *now*?

This was a point on which there was a major and deep rooted difference of opinion and friction between Menon and many officers of the Armed Forces including me. We agreed, of course, that we must encourage indigenous production, and it was cheaper to produce material at home and that it would give us self-esteem to do so. But we did *not* agree that (despite the prevailing threats to our borders) we did not need to import our *essential* equipment at once. We felt that to keep our Forces short of these weapons and equipment in such a situation would be extremely unwise. We, therefore, strongly advocated that we must import, whatever the financial implications, items of equipment the need of which was operationally inescapable, and which could not be produced indigenously *in time*.

Menon had assured Parliament, year after year, that the defence of the country was in good shape and that we were fully prepared to cope with any threat to our borders effectively. This was contrary to facts and despite the army having warned him repeatedly and in writing that due to serious shortages in man power and, weapons and equipment, it was unable to defend India adequately. Our military preparedness, diplomacy and our national attitude should really have been suitably synchronized.

General Thapar grew restive with the situation and

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asked me whether, in view of Menon's attitude in the matter, he should not bring this serious state of affairs to the notice of Nehru. I told Thapar that as he had not been discussing such matters with Nehru informally in the past, and in view of his strained relations with Krishna Menon, if he went to the Prime Minister over the head of the Defence Minister, he was bound to be misunderstood and placed in an embarrassing position. I also told him that Nehru, more than ever before, was averse to hearing anything against Krishna Menon.[69] I therefore took upon myself (as Nehru had permitted me to discuss important military matters with him informally since long) to bring to the notice of the Prime Minister, the gist of this case. I accordingly saw Nehru and advocated to him two things: that the private sector should be allowed to join hands with the public sector to cope with the huge task of producing indigenously and with speed, varied items of defence equipment; and that the Army's inescapable needs in weapons and equipment be made up by imports from abroad expeditiously (as we did in 1963 to a much greater degree). I also told Nehru of the letters the Army Headquarters had written to Government through Menon on the subject, which had brought back no reply.

Nehru took little action on any of these matters as required by the army. Menon had conveyed to Nehru his own views in these matters, which happened to be different to those of the Army Brass. Actually, Nehru shared Menon's views (or he shared Nehru's?) on this subject. Menon, I think, was largely responsible for putting Nehru in a frame of mind by which he looked sceptically towards our repeat-

69 Menon had recently staged a resounding victory at the polls from his constituency at Bombay and silenced most of his critics. As he triumphed despite heavy odds, it created a deep impression on Nehru who now thought that Menon's position had at last been vindicated by this mandate of the people. This made Menon more powerful than ever before and Nehru gave him a freer rein in most matters. During this period Menon achieved some notable results and also made some notable mistakes.

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ed representations to grant sufficient funds for modernizing the Army and making up its various shortages.

If Nehru issued any other orders to Menon contrary to what I have said above, the Army were not aware of them or Menon did not carry them out!

Nehru believed—on seeing reports by some of his Ambassadors, the assessment of his Foreign Office, the advice of some of his political and other confidants—that the Chinese were really not so strong, as they were made out to be, and had many of their own troubles; they had internal disorders due to food shortage, floods and an unpopular dictatorial regime; that there were revolts in Tibet, and on the whole, the morale of the Chinese people and their Armed Forces was cracking up; and that if we dealt with them strongly, we should have the better of them. This assessment happened to be far from true. Nehru felt that due to this background, the Chinese were in no position to divert their attention to anything except putting their own internal matters right. In fact he, as also some of his colleagues in the Cabinet, held the view that there would be no war with China and all the scare the army high command were making was a military miscalculation. In other words, as they thought the soldiers were overstressing this point and putting up extravagant demands which were not quite necessary, they remained apathetic[70] towards them. They never realized that our needs were really urgent with grave implications. Menon held the same view and hence did not see the urgency of importing *some* of our essential equipment which the Service Chiefs advised him to do repeatedly. The Civil Servants by and large shared the same thought and attitude. When Menon, Morarji

70 The general tendency at the highest level was one of complacency for quite some years. F. S. Tucker wrote in the *Economist* of 3 November 1962: 'In 1947, when in India, I wrote regarding the (possible) Chinese attack on India's North East Frontier, after we had left disgruntled, frustrated by India, deserted by Britian ... India has a few years to spare, only a few, to prepare her frontier defence....'

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Desai and Nehru did not react suitably to the operationally urgent demands of the Services High Command, the latter should have perhaps forced this issue.

Earlier in 1962, I got a message from Nehru's house to see him that night at ten. He was always punctual in his appointments and so I was ushered into his study at the tick of time. He asked me how well I knew Chester Bowles. I told him I knew the latter well and added I remembered gratefully how he had come to the late Maj Gen Hari Badhwar's rescue at my personal request by taking him to USA for treatment of cancer. Nehru said he had received a message that Bowles was coming to India as President Kennedy's special representative and proposed seeing me during his visit to Delhi soon. Nehru then thought for a minute and asked me to see Menon in this connection. When I confronted the latter the following morning, he said sarcastically: 'General, why don't you ask for an American citizenship. It will be easier for all concerned.' (There are thousands in India, as elsewhere, friendly with one or another country, but they do not, for that reason, ask for foreign citizenship.)

I looked hard at Menon, without replying. He then said Chester Bowles had no business wanting to see our Generals and that I should tell him so.

'It is not I who am seeking an interview with Chester Bowles. It is the other way around. Nor has he asked me direct,' I said. (And he was not the first foreign diplomat or politician wanting to see an Indian General.) 'In any case,' I went on, 'Now that his request to see me has come through our Government, why can't the latter make a convenient excuse and inform Chester Bowles accordingly.'

'It is easier said than done,' replied Krishna Menon, 'Chester Bowles is coming here as President Kennedy's Special representative and for us not to accede to his request even by implication would be neither prudent nor easy.'

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'Then, Mr Defence Minister,' I said, 'let him see me.'

'Oh, you are quite impossible,' Krishna Menon said in a rage.

'But, Sir,' I inquired, 'You have not yet told me whether Chester Bowles and I can meet or not?'

Krishna Menon went red in the face and replied in a monosyllable, 'Yes.'

Our meeting then ended abruptly.

Chester Bowles called on me a few days later and said at the outset that he was talking to me as an old friend. Speaking of the Chinese threat to India, he asked how serious in my opinion China was in its dispute with India. *I replied I had thought at first that the Chinese incursions into our territory had only a political significance and that our relations with China could perhaps be normalized by negotiation, but was now convinced by their pattern of behaviour recently, specially in Ladakh, that they seemed determined to establish their claims on some of our territory, if necessary, by force.* Bowles enquired whether matters might come to a head and if so, when and what we proposed doing in the circumstances. I said the Chinese were likely to provoke a clash with us in the summer or autumn of 1962 and this raised many problems for us. I hoped, like most countries threatened with war, specially by a stronger enemy, powers-that-be in our country would also work out, at least as a deterrent, with some friends a basis of mutual co-operation to meet such a (serious) contingency in advance rather than too late or after[71] the event, as the writing was on the wall. Chester Bowles and I then had some polite conversation about our respective countries after which he left. Chester Bowles wrote to me soon after that he would do his best to bring the greatest degree of understanding of our problems to the attention of President Kennedy. No suitable action was, however, taken by anyone, to strengthen our Forces

71 As a matter of fact, India did seek and receive military equipment from USA but *after the event* (in 1963).

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sufficiently. Writing to me in 1963, Chester Bowles said: 'I vividly remember our conversation in early March 1962 in which you had accurately predicted that the Chinese would attack during the summer or fall (autumn) months of that year. If only we could have worked out the basis of cooperating to meet the situation in advance, as you suggested, the events in October and November (1962) might have taken somewhat different course.'

As C.G.S., I discussed the question of the new equipment we were to acquire with Menon several times. When he selected the MIG 21 Supersonic aircraft for our Air Force, I asked him, as a matter of great professional interest to me and the Army, whom the Air Force supports, if it was the best available machine from our point of view. I put this question as I had been told by the Air Force experts that there were similar aircraft manufactured by more than one country. For instance, it is no secret that there were also the American 'F/104', the Swedish 'Saab Draken', the French 'Mirage III' and the British 'Lightning'. Menon assured me that the Scientific Adviser[72] of the Defence Ministry had confirmed that from many points of view the MIG was an excellent bargain for us. I had, of course, heard other views from many experts which I conveyed to Menon, but he said it was better to buy this item from Russia than any other country (because he felt that the Russians were more cooperative in this matter, particularly in regard to selling these planes in rupees and collaborating with us in their production in India). I was not against buying equipment from Russia but was only wondering whether the equipment we were acquiring was the best available in the world from our point of view.

The decision to introduce the MIG 21 into the I.A.F.

72 I am not so sure whether the Scientific Adviser had any practical knowledge or competence to hazard a view on the intricacies or capabilities of a modern supersonic jet aircraft which only the Air Force experts with vast practical experience could evaluate but were not allowed to do so.

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was dictated by the military necessity to redress the balance of an air strength (which it was thought lay with a certain neighbouring country whose Air Force had aircraft with mach 2 speed and therefore had a qualitative edge over the I.A.F). In simple practical terms, it was a sensible decision when viewed in the context of the American reluctance to sell a specific number of F 104s to India. The Soviet Government, however, agreed to supply a modified version of the MIG 21 as a weapon's system complete with air-to-air missile and, as an earnest of their intention, delivered a few aircraft to the I.A.F. of the same standard as in squadron service with the Soviet Air Force. However, a deliberate policy decision was taken to produce the MIGs in India under licence and an agreement was signed in Moscow a little later providing for a comprehensive Soviet collaboration in setting up the production units and mastering of production. This could be a carefully calculated political decision to secure Soviet association with an important defence project at a time when Sino-Indian tension was at its height. It could also be a serious attempt to enter the field of manufacture of highly sophisticated aeronautical equipment and weapons, regardless of the economics of the project.

The Soviet adherence to the Project, despite the deteriorating India-China relations, looked like an unqualified success for the policy to seek assistance from that quarter for the acquisition of supersonic aircraft and had to be matched by a positive compliance by the Indian Government without regard to the possible political and financial risks involved in the venture. On the other hand, the I.A.F., feeling helpless without a supersonic fighter to defend its bases and centres of population and industry and, therefore, incapable, so it considered, of intervening directly in the land battle, had clamoured for this grave deficiency to be made up without delay. Indigenous production of MIGs, in view of the ambitious programme of the Project,

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would be a painfully slow affair. Indeed, nothing could be more certain than that bureaucratic obstructiveness and interference (which are the bane of all public undertakings in India, particularly in regard to the implementation of projects) would cause frustrating delays in the MIG production. The logical course of action for the Indian Government in the circumstances would have been to order a quantity of Russian-built 'flyaway' MIGs to help the I.A.F. tide over the uncertain date by which their production in India got underway. Yet this was not done and the failure could well be an admission of the Air Staff's disinterestedness[73] in the aircraft and their preference for other contemporary types. Many key officers including Air Force experts felt sceptical of the MIG 21. For instance when Menon asked Admiral Shankar, Controller General of Defence Production, for his views, he said that by its introduction in the Indian Air Force, the whole electronic system would have to be changed after the Russian pattern which, apart from raising many major problems, would cost us a fortune we could ill-afford. Menon then told Shankar that he was talking through his hat! When Air Marshal Engineer, the Air Chief, was asked for his views, he also ventured to point out a few snags about the MIG 21 which exasperated Menon who closed the discussion by saying, 'Air Marshal your name may be one, but you are not an engineer, by profession, and hence don't try and give opinions on technical matters!'

Talking of the MIG 21, I also pointed out to Menon, as a matter of general interest, some current problems of the I.A.F. as I saw them. I told him that these problems

73 There was a general feeling in the Indian Air Force that MIG aircraft was being thrust or imposed on them by Government against their better judgment. In their view the American F-104 supersonic fighter, capable of flying at a speed of about 1,500 miles per hour, had a superior all-round performance and fighting capabilities when compared with the MIG 21.

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stemmed from the fact that the I.A.F. had in squadron service over twenty different types of aircraft for the four or five roles required of it as a modern Air Force. These diverse types of aircraft, moreover, originated from five countries, viz. France, Britain, USA, USSR, and Canada, thus making the I.A.F. the best example of an independent Air Force with almost complete lack of standardization of equipment. Such static development could not fail to rob the I.A.F. of one of the original characteristics of air power, i.e. flexibility, thus denying the operational commanders the essential requirement of mobility of squadrons without which a credible defensive posture in war is impossible from the Air Force standpoint. Training of aircrews and, to a large extent, of technical groundsmen, having to be diversified, talent, skill and experience were extremely thinly spread. Serviceability of aircraft and their associated equipments was tending to be low and, consequently, the level of operational training on the decline.

Aircraft serviceability with its inevitable impact on training was further adversely affected by two factors. There was, first of all, the gross misemployment, with the full knowledge and approval of the Government, of a large number of highly trained Air Force engineers in different categories and specializations. Some years ago, the I.A.F. took over the responsibility for implementing a Project for the manufacture, under a licence sold by a British firm, of a propellor-jet medium transport aircraft without the slightest regard for the legitimacy of such a business for an Air Force, whose technical resources were never enough for meeting its own immediate and ever-increasing servicing and maintenance needs. An overzealous Commander of a key Maintenance Depot was given charge of the Project and there followed, in due course, a systematic depletion of some of the first-line operational wings, training establishments and maintenance depots of some of their best technical supervisory and instructional staffs. Under the care-

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ful guidance of the British resident specialists, less than half a dozen airframes were assembled or partially produced after prolonged delays, never satisfactorily explained.

In the process, the I.A.F. has had to pay a heavy price which would perhaps be difficult to assess in terms of money alone. The standard of aircraft maintenance both at the squadrons and at the depots, as was to be expected, suffered serious deterioration which could be the direct cause of many an accident attributed to technical failures.

When Menon did not agree with this analysis, I cited to him a specific case which proved my point. Two pilots went to the Aircraft Maintenance Depot at Kanpur on 25 May 1961 to ferry to their units two new Toofani aircraft under repair kept there in storage. Before a ferry pilot arrives for the collection of a new aircraft allotted to his Squadron, it is to be kept fully serviceable and ready for flight. It is also duly checked by the test pilots and any faults detected by them rectified. Prior to accepting the allotted aircraft, the Squadron ferry pilot has to do an air test on it, and be fully satisfied. On this occasion, one of the pilots in question had to carry out five air tests on three different aircraft before he found two serviceable aircraft for ferry. In one of the air tests, he had total hydraulic and brake failure and in the other air test cock-pit pressurization system was found to be malfunctioning. In the process, the pilot nearly came to grief. This showed that the repairs on these aircraft at the Maintenance Depot, Kanpur, had been far from satisfactory and a near-mishap took place as the limited maintenance resources of our Air Force were being employed on efforts which were not strictly legitimate.

Information as to the extent to which such accidents or 'incidents' (a word used to describe occurrences not resulting in a casualty or damage) increased during the long period of diversion of technical effort was prudently withheld. Nevertheless, air-crew morale, a highly sensitive quality, which depends less on open publicity of this kind

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than on the accident proneness or the technical soundness of their aircraft, was seriously affected. The situation was further aggravated by responsible depot commanders securing official connivance for futile private ventures. For instance they put together war-time junk to produce a single light aircraft, fabrication of a caravan type trailer and the like. Government failed to see the consequences of such extraneous activities which they attributed to 'specialist advice.' There is always available an abundance of the kind of 'advice' required and those giving it at the highest executive and staff levels sometimes choose to trade intellectual honesty and genuine service interests and loyalties for self-aggrandizement, knowing that they will be amply rewarded at the proper time.

The second factor, I told Menon, bearing on aircraft serviceability was more basic. It concerned the chronic lack of ability of maintenance staffs at the higher echelons to evolve a workable system which would ensure the positioning of spare parts at the right time and place. The whole machinery of provisioning, demand and distribution, borrowed like most other organizational concepts from the Royal Air Force, had long since been outstripped by the ever-increasing complexity of modern aircraft and operational techniques. It was compounded by a number of problems, most of which were organic. Simply stated, these were: absence of a standard formula to correspond spares requirements more accurately with actual consumption; the length of the so-called 'pipeline' for the flow of spares from the many countries of origin, involving time-consuming procedures and the entirely unnecessary intermediate control channels; over-staffing and lack of mechanization and finally, thoroughly inefficient communications system. These were formidable but not forbiddable problems. Courage and plain ability, no less than imagination and ingenuity at the highest levels of responsibility were required to match the undoubted

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enthusiasm, loyalty and dedication of the younger officers and senior N.C.Os of our Air Force.

I went in such details with Menon about a service other than my own and with which I was not directly concerned for two reasons: firstly because whatever new aircraft we acquired and the maintenance of our existing machines, had a considerable bearing on the Army (whom the Air Force supports) and on our national defence; secondly, some senior Air Force officers, whose loyalty to the service and the country was beyond question, had asked me if I could discuss these and some other matters with Defence Minister in the hope that I might succeed where they had failed.

I found that, whether it was concerning the Army or the Air Force, all the advice I had given Menon from time to time in the hope of improving our Services, had fallen on deaf ears. Menon did not like my telling him various home truths although they were in the interests of our country because it was his genuine belief that no steps other than those he was already taking were called for. (Most of us neither wish to hear the truth about ourselves from our subordinates, even if it be for our benefit, nor do those who serve under us take the courage, usually, to point out our shortcomings to us, for our good. As Bharavi said in *Kiratarjuniya:* 'What a companion is he who does not tell his master what needs to be told to him for his benefit? What a master is he who does not listen to what is said for his benefit? Prosperity is attracted to a country [(which has)] harmony between the master and his functionaries...')

Ever since Independence, most of our leaders believed that we attained freedom through non-violence and therefore thought that if we could expel a power like the British without use of arms and non-violently, there was little point in wasting large—even though essential—expenditure on our Armed Forces. This idea psychologically played on their

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minds. The importance of the services therefore receded and most of their demands were treated as luxury. Even after the emergence and discovery of the Chinese build-up along our borders, since 1958, when their menace began to loom large, and even when the Press, as a whole, and some of our astute politicians like Acharya Kripalani and Ram Subhag Singh had sounded many notes of warning, Government continued to be apathetic instead of showing a sense of urgency towards the defence of their country. Consequently, the Armed Forces did not receive the attention they deserved, remained inadequate in shape and size, quite unequal to the task of dealing with threats and to India's security, and hence unprepared for war, mainly because of the mental attitude of our Government towards this problem. They never made the requisite attempt to strengthen our Forces, compatible with their operational commitments. I wonder if they realized that a weak Force meant a weak country whose territory was at the mercy of an invader. They should have trained our people to assess the political situation dispassionately and prepared our Forces adequately to meet the military situation. They had done neither. They kept making speeches and statements which alone could *not* fill the bill. I say with full sense of responsibility and without animus that three men must be held answerable for the state of affairs I have portrayed in the last few pages: Nehru, Krishna Menon and Morarji Desai; Nehru for allowing this to happen under his captaincy; Krishna Menon for not taking appropriate and expeditious steps to deal with certain grave matters and situations concerning the defence of the country; and Morarji Desai for not making sufficient funds available for essential defence requirements.

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Five

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The Luck of the Draw

Mine honour is my life, both grow in one
Take honour from me and my life is done

SHAKESPEARE *(Richard II)*

I HAD had no leave for several years at a stretch and sorely needed a break. Moreover, doctors had recommended a change of environment to my daughter, Anuradha, who had a nervous breakdown not long ago. I, therefore, applied for two months' leave from 3 September 1962. Thapar agreed but Krishna Menon objected with a caustic comment saying that he was surprised I should think of being away from my chair at a time when India was threatened both by China and Pakistan. To me this observation seemed quite uncalled for. I, therefore, wrote back to say that I had asked for leave for the two considerations mentioned above. As regards its timing, I said I was given to understand that Menon himself as also Nehru and Morarji Desai were proposing to be away from India for several weeks during the same period which was supposed to be grave. I therefore pointed out that my absence should cause little repercussion as I was only going to Kashmir from where I could be recalled to duty if necessary within a matter of hours. Thereupon, he sanctioned my leave. Maj Gen J. S. Dhillon, my deputy, was to officiate in my place. When I left Delhi for Kashmir on 3 September,

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little did I know that I would never come back to this job except for a day and that trouble was to erupt in NEFA so soon.

My family and I spent a few days in Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Kukarnag and Aharbal. Seldom do I remember having had a more enjoyable holiday. After spending half of my leave. I decided to go back to Delhi for a day or two and then spend the other half in Kulu. Accordingly, we flew back to Delhi on the 1st of October.

Menon and Nehru had by then returned from abroad and thought that in view of the developments in NEFA, I should be recalled from leave forthwith. Thapar rang me up on the 2nd evening accordingly and told me that I was to resume duty the next morning. When I went to office on the 3rd, Maj Gen Dhillon recounted to me what had happened during my absence in the last few weeks. I reconstructed these events from many official sources later and in view of their importance will relate them here at some length. (This needs to be read with care by critics of the war in NEFA.)

8 *September*

Awakened to the Chinese menace on our neglected borders, we had established a post at Dhola,[1] south of the river Namkachu in NEFA (and not far from the Tri-junction of India, Bhutan and Tibet) in the month of June. Dhola was located south of Thag La. It was nearly sixty miles west of Towang, which was our nearest road-head, whereas the Chinese road transport could come up to Le, less than ten miles north of Thag La. This was a distinct advantage to them.

1 The Army Chief had three Army Commanders under him in charge of Eastern, Western and Southern Commands. Dhola was in NEFA which was in the Eastern Command under Lt Gen Sen since 1961. Lt Gen Umrao Singh and Maj Gen Niranjan Pershad were under him as 33 Corps and 4 Divisional Commanders respectively.

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The terrain north of Thag La was flatter than it was south of Dhola. The Chinese could, therefore, have access to the Thag La area more easily than we could up to Dhola. They had a large concentration of Forces not far from Thag La whereas we had to concentrate at Dhola from afar.

Lt Col Misra, O.C. 9 Punjab, received a message at about 4 P.M. at Lumpu west of Towang from our post commander at Dhola, that 'some' Chinese had surrounded his post. He was ordered to hold on at all costs and told that he was being reinforced soon.

9 *September*

A patrol was sent out by 9 Punjab to see where exactly and in what strength the Chinese were present in the vicinity of Dhola. Headquarters, Eastern Command, ordered 7 Brigade 'to make immediate preparation to move forward within forty-eight hours and deal with the Chinese investing Dhola.'

When 33 Corps asked Headquarters, Eastern Command if 1/9 Gorkha Rifles could be made available for this task in view of the urgency of the situation, their request was turned down on the ground that if this battalion was moved that day, it would interfere with their Dussehra (a sacred festival) Celebrations.

10 *September*

A meeting was held in the Defence Minister's room at Delhi with Krishna Menon in the chair where the Chinese incursion south of Thag La and in the vicinity of Dhola on 8 September was discussed. The Army Chief said that one infantry battalion had been ordered to reach Dhola Post.

11 *September*

The battalion referred to above (9 Punjab) sent back a

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message from Bridge 1[2] on the Namkachu River—not far from Dhola—that the Chinese had come on our side of the River Namkachu at Bridge 2 and were on the track to Dhola between Bridge 2 and 3. The same day 7 Brigade ordered 9 Punjab to send another patrol to visit Dhola via the two features south of this river called Karpola 2 and Tsangdhar.

In a meeting in the Defence Minister's room Lt Gen Sen, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, considered that to neutralize the Chinese in the vicinity of Dhola, who were now reported to be about 600 in number, it would be necessary to mount operations with an infantry Brigade (about 3,000 men), the concentration of which would take about ten days. He added that he had ordered the Brigade on this mission already.

The Army Headquarters asked Eastern Command if any additional assistance was required by them. It is not within my knowledge whether any such assistance was sought by Eastern Command from Army Headquarters though the former had a number of grave shortages at the time.

12 *September*

Lt Gen Sen met Lt Gen Umrao Singh and Maj Gen Niranjan Pershad at Tezpur on 12 September and told them that Government had ordered that the Chinese be expelled from our territory from Dhola, south of Thag La ridge.

4 Division accordingly ordered 7 Brigade to concentrate 9 Punjab at Lumpu and 'be prepared' to relieve Dhola Post.

Lt Gen Umrao Singh, Commander 33 Corps and Maj Gen Niranjan Pershad, Commander 4 Division, however, informed Lt Gen Sen, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command

2 There were several bridges on the River Namkachu in the Thag La-Tsangley area, Bridge 1, 2, 3, 4, log bridge and Bridge 5. Dhola was near Bridge 3.

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that the task of clearing the Chinese south of Thag La ridge was beyond the capability of their troops. Our build-up in the Dhola area compared adversely to that of the Chinese. Our ability to reinforce due to lack of troops and roads was limited. Our troops were on restricted scales of rations, and had no reserves. Clothing was scanty for the extreme cold. We were short of ammunition and there were hardly any defence stores available. We did not have adequate fire support. (When I reiterated these difficulties to Nehru, Menon and Thapar in Delhi on 11 October, a week after assuming command in NEFA, it was already too late as the Chinese attack was to come nine days later.)

Lt Gen Umrao Singh told Eastern Command that an attempt on our part to clear the Chinese south of Thag La Ridge would amount to rashness. To produce even a semblance of the resources required for this purpose, he would have to completely uncover Towang and also withdraw troops from Nagaland. He pointed out that Towang was our vital ground and its fall into the Chinese hands would have more disastrous consequences than the fall of Dhola. This is actually what happened later.

13 *September*

General Thapar informed Menon in a meeting that since the number of Chinese in the vicinity of Dhola Post (about 1000 yards away) was *now* reported to be only fifty or sixty—and not 600 as reported by Lt Gen Sen two days earlier—he had instructed the Army Commander not to wait for the concentration of the whole brigade but to take action as soon as he felt he was in a position to do so.

9 Punjab concentrated at Lumpu in order to proceed on and relieve the Dhola Post. When Lt Col Misra asked the Brigade what he should do if he encountered the Chinese on his way to Dhola, he was told to 'persuade' (!) them to go away and not to open fire except in self-defence and only when the Chinese were within fifty yards, accord-

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ing to orders which had emanated from Government. This was long before I had appeared on the scene and an order with which neither Thapar nor I had anything to do.

14 *September*

The Army Chief had made it clear to Government that in view of the many prevailing weaknesses of the Army if they took any armed action in NEFA it was liable to have repercussions on Ladakh which the Indian Army might not be able to cope with. *In fact, Lt Gen Daulet Singh said in a Conference in the presence of Menon and Thapar that if the Chinese attacked us in Ladakh, they would annihilate us there (as they in fact did in October and November* 1962). Lt Gen Sen also ventured to say in this meeting that he would be incapable of dealing with them in NEFA if they came in strength. (If one or two of our Generals—known for their bravado—had heard Daulet and Sen stating this inconvenient fact, they would have called both of them defeatists.) Government thought, however, that irrespective of the consequences, time had come when we should give—or appear to give—the Chinese a 'crack' at least in one place (to appease public opinion?) as we could no longer tolerate their encroachments on our territory and had to draw a line somewhere.

Under orders of HQ Eastern Command, 9 Punjab left Lumpu for the Dhola area at 0400 hours. It rained heavily en route and by night the battalion reached the bamboo hut just across the Hathung La at an altitude of about 15,000 ft.

(Messages kept pouring in from the Dhola Post from the 8th to the 14th that it was surrounded by the enemy.)

15 *September*

A meeting was held in the Defence Minister's room where it was decided to contain the Chinese near Thag La and, if possible, to establish a post at Karpo La and Yam La.

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By 0830 hours on the 15th, 9 Punjab reached Bridge 2 where it found the Chinese on both sides of the River shouting at them in Hindi, '*Tum Chale Jao, Yeh Zamin Hamari Hai, Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai*', (You go back, this is our land. Indians and Chinese are brothers). As Misra's orders were to fire at the Chinese only in self-defence, finding them blocking his way but not actually firing at his men, he left a Company at Bridge 2 and made a detour, without provoking a fight. From there he went across country to Dhola (Bridge 3). The Chinese made no attempt to follow his party. He reached Dhola at 1300 hours on the 15th and found that there *were* about fifty Chinese on the other side of the river and who had destroyed Bridge 3, as reported[3] by our Post Commander on 8 September. (The Chinese *had*, however, come, south of Thag La in what was our territory.) Lt Col Misra sent back a message to this effect to 7 Brigade.

Army Headquarters ordered Eastern Command that 9 Punjab was to capture the Chinese position one thousand yards North East of Dhola and contain them South of Thag La. 4 Division informed 33 Corps with a copy to Army Headquarters on the 15th that Chinese strength which was thought to be fifty or sixty, as reported on 13 September, had increased to two Companies and hence no attack on them was possible now by only one Battalion.

17 *September*

There was a meeting in Defence Minister's room in which Lt Gen Sen, the Army Commander, said it would now take more time for the Brigade to concentrate (his earlier estimate of ten days being incorrect). It was decided to carry out defensive reconnaissance and capture any small Chinese pockets and dominate the area (South of Thag La).

3 See remarks under 8 September also.

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Lt Col Misra got a message direct from the Army Headquarters ordering that his battalion was to capture the area Thag La, Yam La and Karpo La II by the 19th. Maj Gen Niranjan Pershad protested to 33 Corps against this interference from Delhi who were giving direct orders to one of the battalions under his command. Misra's men had not had a square meal, at these high altitude positions, for six days and were short of ammunition, labour and ponies. The same night Misra got orders from the Brigade that he should pend action on the message from Army Headquarters. These orders and counter orders were pretty confusing at the time.

18 *September*

Round about this date the Defence Minister, the Finance Minister and the Prime Minister proceeded abroad on various missions. In a press conference at Delhi, a Senior Civil Servant said that the Army had been told to drive[4] the Chinese away from our territory in NEFA—(regardless of whether it had the capacity and resources to do it or not). Was he, in effect, taking up a position that it was the Army and not the Government with whom the responsibility for the current situation lay (or else he should *not* have made such a public statement on this secret matter). By this date, the Chinese had concentrated one battalion South of Thag La.

20 *September*

There was a meeting in the Defence Minister's room where the Army Chief stated that the second infantry battalion would reach Dhola area on the 24th and the third battalion on the 29th, thus completing the concentration of a Brigade in the requisite area.

4 Nehru made a similar statement about four weeks later (see page 387). Were these statements made for public consumption only?

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Brigadier Dalvi reached Dhola and returned to Bridge 2 at 1000 hours the same day. He discussed with Misra the possibilities of capturing the Thag La area. Dalvi and Misra were convinced that it was not possible to do so with one battalion specially with so many shortages of weapons, ammunition, equipment and rations.

At 2240 hours that day, a Chinese sentry threw a grenade in one of our bunkers wounding three of our men. One of the wounded opened up his light machine gun on the enemy position from where fire was returned. Fire then started on both sides for the first time in this operation. Two enemy sentries were killed and two wounded. 9 Punjab on orders from the Division, through the Brigade, shouted across to the Chinese in Hindi to take away their dead and assured them that whilst they were doing so, they would not be fired upon by us. There was no response from the Chinese during the day, but during the night 21st/22nd they shouted they were coming to remove their dead. 9 Punjab ordered a 'stand to.' Before the Chinese came to collect their dead bodies, they shouted to our men: 'We are coming. Do not shoot.' We did not. From the 16th to the 20th, previous to this battle, the Chinese had kept shouting regularly at us, '*Hindi Chini bhai bhai. Yeh Zamin hamari hai. Tum wapas jao*'. (Indians and Chinese are brothers. This is our land. You go back.)

On the 21st, Dalvi decided to set up his Brigade HQ at Lumpu which is two days march *before* one reaches Dhola.

21 *September*

The Brigade sent forty pioneer troops with 40 lbs of rations each from Lumpu to Bridge 2 for 9 Punjab. The pioneers covered this journey, normally done in one and half days, in more than twice that time. Moreover, they reached Bridge 2 with hardly any rations on them at all. They had either eaten them on the way (!) or had thrown them by the wayside to escape carrying loads.

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22 *September*

Menon was at this time at the United Nations in USA. At a meeting in the Officiating Defence Minister Raghuramiah's room, the consequences of the action proposed to be taken in Dhola area were discussed. The Army Chief stated that the Chinese strength was estimated to be a Company at Tsangley (near Dhola), one Company North-East of Dhola and one Company at Thag La Pass. He pointed out that the Chinese as a result might increase their strength against our troops in the Dhola area, retaliate elsewhere in NEFA or attack our posts in Ladakh. After some discussion it was decided by Government that as a matter of policy there was no alternative but to evict the Chinese from the Dhola area. *The Army Chief then asked for a written directive from the Government for evicting the Chinese from this area, which was issued.* (He asked for written authority because he was being told to evict the Chinese in spite of his pointing out the consequences of such a step.)

22 *September to* 29 *September*[5]

During this period intermittent firing was exchanged between the Chinese and ourselves. On the 28 evening the Chinese fired automatic weapons on our position at Bridge 2, wounding three of our men. At 0200 hours on 29 September we fired four rounds of 3-inch Mortar for the first time. This silenced the Chinese fire. The next day we saw fourteen corpses and some 'walking wounded' being carried away by the Chinese.

Maj Gen Niranjan Pershad, Commander 4 Division, reached Lumpu on 24 September and was to have left for Dhola on the 26th but was told to wait at Lumpu for the

5 On 29 September Commander 7 Brigade (Brigadier Dalvi) pointed out to HQ 4 Division that: *(a) He planned to cross Bridge 5 and establish a bridgehead up to Tsangley* and to occupy Muksar and Singjang North of River Namkachu; and that *(b)* our troops must be acclimatized before concentrating at high altitudes.

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Corps Commander who arrived there on the 27th. Lt Gen Umrao Singh informed Maj Gen Niranjan Pershad (once again) that Government had decided that the Chinese must be expelled from our territory and that this task had to be completed at the earliest. When the Corps and Divisional Commanders raised many logistical and other difficulties at Tezpur soon after, the Army Commander (Lt Gen Sen) brushed them aside.

On the 29th, a Company of 2 Rajput reached Bridge 1 area and were placed under command of 9 Punjab. The remaining portion of 2 Rajput and 1/9 Gorkha were still at Lumpu about two stages behind Dhola.

A patrol was sent to Tsangley *north of river Namkachu* on 29 September which came back on 2 October. They reported there was no trace of any enemy on the other side of the River Namkachu in the vicinity of Bridge 5.

30 *September*

At a meeting in the Defence Minister's room, the Army Chief stated, on being informed by Lt Gen Sen, that the Chinese strength in the Dhola Post in Thag La area was one battalion. He also stated that three of our battalions had concentrated in the 'forward area,' (actually, two of the three battalions were still far behind Dhola).

The Defence Minister said Government policy was to make an impact on the Chinese in NEFA *before they settled down for the winter.* (Was this 'tough posture' an attempt on Menon's part to appear in line with his oft-repeated claim in the past, made publicly from time to time, that India was capable of defending herself against aggression from any quarters; or was it a typical political statement with a double meaning to appease public opinion? or, could it have been just bravado?)

Lt Gen Umrao Singh wrote to Lt Gen Sen on this date:

(a) Before the operation could be launched, 580 tons of ammunition

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and stores be stocked at Tsangdhar which must be accepted as the main Dropping Zone for the offensive operations.

(b) The Namkachu Valley is extremely rugged and narrow, with thickly wooded and precipitous slopes. The river is a considerable obstacle. Room for manoeuvre is extremely limited. This makes a direct attack on Thag La Pass suicidal.

(c) Our non-Combatant pioneers have proved useless.

(d) The total number of civilian porters available in the area (far behind Dhola) is three to five hundred which is quite inadequate for our requirements. It is just not possible to stock Tsangdhar from Lumpu by the land route.

(e) The casualty evacuation is going to be a major problem.

1 *October*

7 Brigade ordered 9 Punjab (three days before I took over 4 Corps) to reconnoitre a possible crossing place between Bridges 4 and 5. Major Chaudhuri of 9 Punjab, who was detailed for this reconnaissance, reported that there were no Chinese on the other side of Bridge 4. He also said that due to no rains for some days, water in the river was shallow and the current slow. In his view an improvised log bridge could be made anywhere across the river as plenty of trees were available on site.

2 *October*

At a meeting in the Defence Minister's room, Lt Gen Sen confirmed that the Chinese had roughly one battalion South of Thag La and that 7 Brigade had concentrated (in the forward area) except for the mountain (four) guns and their personnel. The Army Commander (Sen) stated at this stage that his logistical build-up might not be completed even by 10 October. (He first thought this could be done by 21 September, then by 29 September, and now *not* even by 10 October.) The Defence Minister enquired why Tsangley had not been occupied by us when found without the Chinese, as we had reported earlier. Lt Gen Sen said he had issued written orders to Lt Gen Umrao Singh, the Corps Commander, some days

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ago, but the latter had replied that Tsangley was not a good position to hold tactically; also, it would give away our plans to the Chinese. In one of the written messages to Lt Gen Sen, which was repeated to Army Headquarters, Lt Gen Umrao Singh pointed out that whereas Lt Gen Sen was perfectly entitled to give him orders to deploy troops in a particular area, he was not correct in specifying the strength of these deployments (which Sen had done). In fact, he implied that Lt Gen Sen was interfering unduly in his realm of command. Lt Gen Sen said in this meeting, in the presence of the Defence Minister, that he had decided to overrule the Corps Command and had ordered him to occupy Tsangley immediately. (General Thapar and Lt Gen Sen decided to replace Lt Gen Umrao Singh as the latter and Lt Gen Sen were not getting on well together.)

On the same day, General Thapar saw the Prime Minister along with Lt Gen Sen. He pointed out that this was the first time we were going to use force against the Chinese, though for good reasons, (as against walking into a vacuum, without opposition, a practice followed by us so far) and that this was bound to have serious repercussions. *Nehru said he had good reasons to believe that the Chinese would not take any strong action against us.* This was Nehru's (and Krishna Menon's) belief even as late as 2 October 1962.

3 *October*

I resumed duty as Chief of the General Staff on being recalled from leave. It was decided by Government and General P. N. Thapar, the Army Chief, late that evening to create a new (4) Corps and to appoint me[6] as its Commander. I was informed of this decision by the Army Chief at about 2100 hours at his residence. He told me how a

6 *The Time* news-magazine of 19 October 1962, stated: 'Nehru a fortnight ago appointed Lt Gen Kaul to act as Commander of a special Task Force to intensify operations against the Chinese intruders. A tough Sandhurst (graduate) . . . Kaul's assignment was to free Indian territory in NEFA.'

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special Corps was being raised to meet the Chinese threat whilst 33 Corps under Lt Gen Umrao Singh was to look after the threats from Pakistan and from the Nagas exclusively. The Corps under my command was to consist at the moment of only about 6,000 men or two (5 and 7) Infantry Brigades, (with the possibility of a third Brigade joining me later) whereas normally there are six to twelve Infantry Brigades in a Corps. These Brigades were at the time under 4 Division. There was also another Division to be formed which would be given to me, apart from other reinforcement, later. This was done but too late. I was to be responsible for a frontier of nearly 360 miles long in NEFA. (In contrast, Field Marshal Slim had eighteen Divisions for a front of 700 miles in Burma as 14th Army Commander at one stage during World War II.) Thapar said that despite our large commitments all along the border from Ladakh to NEFA, he would try to build up my Corps as soon as possible. I was told both by Menon and Thapar that my task was to evict the Chinese from the Dhola–Thag La area.

Apart from its normal infantry component, a Corps should have considerable artillery, engineer, transport and supply resources in support. It should also have a large staff and communications set-up in order to co-ordinate its activities. None of these facilities were available to me but 'were to be built up as time went on.' It is only *after* such an organization is assembled (and not overnight) that a Corps begins to function. Normally it takes between six months and a year to raise and train a Corps Headquarters in its operational and administrative functions. It takes another six months to a year, (or more) after units and formations have been made available, to make a Corps battle-worthy. (It will be interesting to note that two of the Corps, which fought the Indo-Pakistan war in 1965, were raised many years ago during which time they had ample opportunity to prepare themselves for their operational role.) I, on the other hand, was given command of a Corps which was

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practically non-existent on the ground and the headquarters of which had yet to be raised. I was, thus, expected to perform a miracle and begin to operate immediately. I could hardly start bickering about these obvious handicaps at a time when India found herself in a precarious situation and therefore decided to cross my fingers, make the best of my lean resources and face the situation as best as I could.

Thapar said if I did not wish to accept this post, for any reason, I had only to say so and he would see that I stayed on as his C.G.S. I told him there was no question of my refusing, on any account, a command in the field, specially, in a critical situation, for which I was proud to have been chosen. Thapar shook hands with me and wished me luck. After exchanging some pleasantries, he told me to go and see the Defence Minister in connection with my new appointment.

When I met Menon he said he hoped he was not landing me in a thankless task but assured me I would enjoy his full confidence during the forthcoming operations. He then told me to go and see Prime Minister Nehru as soon as I could. I met Nehru at his residence at about 10.30 that night. He greeted me affably and asked how I felt about my going to NEFA. I replied that though I was happy at being chosen for this assignment, my fear was that, despite our many over-all weaknesses, we were being provoked by the Chinese into committing a small Force in an outlandish area like Dhola. Nehru said India tried to make friends with China and settle her disputes with her peacefully but in vain. He went on to say he agreed with some of his advisers in the External Affairs Ministry that we had tolerated the Chinese intrusions into our territories far too long and a stage had come when we must take—or appear to take—a strong stand irrespective of consequences[7]. In his view, the Chinese were establishing their claim on NEFA

7 This was quite contrary to Nehru's earlier belief as expressed to me.

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by coming into Dhola which we must contest by whatever means we had at our disposal. He, therefore, hoped the Chinese would see reason and withdraw from Dhola but in case they did not, we would have no option but to expel them from our territory *or at least try to do so to the best of our ability*. If we failed to take such action, Nehru said, Government would forfeit public confidence completely. Nehru then hoped all would go well with me and asked me to keep him informed if there were any important developments.

Nehru and his Government were deeply concerned about public opinion which was worked up at the time. If such was not the case, our Government would not have singled out the intrusion of the Chinese at Dhola, like which dozens of others had taken place elsewhere. On this occasion, Nehru's advisers in the Foreign Office and elsewhere must bear the responsibility of letting Nehru adopt such a posture which we were not strong enough to sustain.

(I knew that it was for the sake of peace that Nehru had been trying to make friends with China—the same peace for the sake of which Shastri signed the Tashkent declaration with Pakistan in January 1966. In this process, India and Pakistan had to make many concessions against their avowed professions. Yet Shastri was hailed as a great architect of peace and Nehru was widely criticised. The fact is that Nehru had forfeited the sympathy of the Congress Syndicate and the Opposition alike, whereas Shastri's tact and humility won him support from the same quarters.

As an example, when Chinese intruded into our territories across Thag La in NEFA in 1962, the whole country shouted at Nehru [and Menon] for lack of vigilance. Yet when the Chinese intruded across the same Thag La and came as far as Hathung La in 1965—three miles deeper than they had done in 1962—in spite of our much stronger de-

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fences, not one murmur was raised against Shastri [or Chavan] as the possible voices of dissent both in the Parliament and in the press had been appeased systematically.)

I feel that if certain political opponents had not gone for Nehru, as they had done from 1959 onwards, not making sure that our defences were duly strengthened and yet provoking him to take retaliatory[8] steps against the Chinese, and Nehru had been left alone, a clash between China and India might have come later than 1962. If it had come a few years later, India could have been in a better position to deal with it. But I suppose no one realized then that the retribution for our 'strong' posture, specially when we were unprepared, would be so swift and so catastrophic.

I came back home about midnight. As I was to leave for NEFA the next morning, to assume my new command, I had only a few hours of the night left in which to do my last minute packing and see to scores of other little things one has to do in such circumstances. As no staff had been earmarked or placed at my disposal, and none would be awaiting me in Tezpur, I thought it would perhaps be a good thing if I took, for the time being at least, and till permanent incumbents were posted later, some trusted staff officers with me before taking over a brand new Corps. (Though 33 Corps could lend me some whom I may not have known.) With the agreement of the Army Chief, and in consultation with Maj Gen Moti Sagar, the Military Secretary, I did so. These officers were warned, between the hours of midnight and two in the morning, to accompany me to NEFA in a few hours' time. By the time I had finished my last minute preparations, dawn was already breaking.

8 It is interesting that for similar intrusions during Shastri's regime the same people advocated that India should not make a 'wrong' move (!) as I suppose by now they were in a soberer frame of mind.

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4 *October*

After snatching a hasty breakfast, I took leave of my family and some intimate friends who had come to see me off and flew from Palam towards my doom.

I landed at Tezpur in the afternoon. Lt Generals Sen and Umrao Singh received me at the airport and we all drove to the circuit house where we were to spend the night. Lt Gen Umrao Singh had been dealing with NEFA so far. The territories under him were too vast when judged in relation to his resources.

The total Force I had under me as a Corps Commander was the 4 Infantry Division less a Brigade. (A Corps can be up to three to four Divisions as was the case in the Indo-Pak conflict in September 1965.) I had insufficient artillery, no fighter Air cover nor any armour except a few decrepit tanks and miserable logistics for a vast area. Crossing my fingers, I had a meeting with Lt Generals Sen and Umrao Singh soon after my arrival at Tezpur. I heard from them what had been done so far to concentrate 7 Infantry Brigade in the Dhola area. Lt Gen Sen had said in the Defence Minister's meeting in Delhi that three of our battalions had been concentrated by the 29th in the forward area. Actually even on 4 October, only one battalion and a bit were in Dhola, most of the others being still at Lumpu which was about fifteen miles west of Dhola. The logistical build-up on the ground was far behind the schedule because of lack of porters, the only means of transportation at those heights. We had grave deficiencies in the strength of porters. I commandeered about a thousand from the Border Roads Organization and informed the Government accordingly. I took some other similar steps as a result of which I hoped that 7 Brigade would be concentrated in the Dhola area by 9 October. My reasons for accelerating the concentration process were:

(a) If we had to expel the Chinese from our territory near Dhola,

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despite our many disparities, our concentration there should take place quicker than that of the enemy.

(b) If we went on delaying to concentrate in the requisite area, it would soon start snowing in Dhola and the weather would then jeopardize our proposed operations.

I never sent any direct signals to Government as has been suggested by some. My only communications were to Lt Gen Sen, the Army Commander (and as I was ordered to do, to repeat the same communication to General Thapar, the Army Chief). After my first conference at Tezpur on 4 October, I sent a signal to Eastern Command (Sen) and Army Headquarters (Thapar) informing them that I apprehended that the enemy might lure us into Tsangdhar-Dhola Sector with the intention of capturing Towang, which is what happened a few days later.

Hitherto no senior officer above the rank of a Brigadier had visited the Tsangdhar-Dhola-Namkachu area situated amidst inhospitable terrain and across high mountains. I, therefore, decided as soon as I reached Tezpur on the evening of 4 October that I would go to Dhola the following morning and see for myself the terrain in which we were to operate and feel the pulse of my troops in the forward battle areas. (My Corps was still assembling and this trip would only take a week.)

By the time I had finished giving orders on the logistical tie-up and the concentration of my operational force, it was already well past midnight. I then snatched a little sleep, only to be ready by first light for my trail to Dhola.

5 *October*

Lt Generals Sen and Umrao Singh saw me off at the Tezpur airport from where I flew to Darranga at the Bhutan border at six in the morning. I was accompanied by Lt Col Sanjeev Rao. As the set-up of my Corps would take some days to assemble, I also asked Brigadier K. K. Singh, Major Malhotra and one or two others on my staff to follow me the

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next day so that they could see for themselves and evaluate the ground on which we were to operate, enabling them to deal with the problems which might arise, realistically. I had already asked Maj Gen Niranjan Pershad, Commander, 4 Infantry Division, to meet me at Ziminthang and accompany me to Dhola. (I left behind at my Headquarters my Brigadier-in-charge Administration, Brigadier K. D. Pachnanda, and some others, to tie up the logistical arrangements while we were away.)

At the so-called airstrip at Darranga, where I changed into a helicopter, I found that there was no arrangement to decant petrol into an aircraft except by primitive means, which caused hours of delay to my schedule. We eventually landed in Ziminthang that afternoon. This small village lies at an altitude of about 6,000 feet on the old trade route from Lhasa via Khinzamane to India through Towang. I met there a certain Intelligence agent on arrival. After having been briefed by him regarding the possible strength of Chinese troops, poised against us in the Dhola area and in view of the inadequacy of our Forces and their logistical support, I sent a message to Eastern Command and Army Headquarters in which some of the facts reported were:

(a) That the Chinese had at least a Brigade concentrated in the Thag La area already.

(b) That the Chinese weapons in this area included, in addition to Artillery and heavy mortars, recoil-less guns.

(c) That I could *not* (in view of our lean and their far superior resources) rule out the possibility of the enemy overwhelming our Forces.

(d) That unless we retrieved this situation speedily, we might have a national disaster (into which we had blundered without first being sure of the relative strength of the Chinese and ourselves).

(e) That, therefore, I recommend as a precautionary measure, offensive air support (perhaps a double-edged weapon, but worth a gamble) to be positioned suitably without delay and made available to me at the shortest notice, if necessary.

(Whilst massive offensive Air support was made available to the Army before it embarked on its operations against Pakistan in

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1965, here we were still *discussing* whether offensive Air support should be made available to me.)

As the weather broke down in the afternoon, our helicopter was unable to take me up to Sirkhim, which was the next place where we could land. I therefore flew to Lumpu, to fill my time usefully, for which the weather was clear. I ordered the bulk of Headquarters, 7 Brigade, 2 Rajput and 1/9 Gorkhas—awaiting porters to carry their stores—to move the next day to the Dhola area. I told them I would hasten the despatch of their supplies and other material forward as best as I could.

If these battalions did not move forward at once, apart from the fact that the enemy was likely to concentrate in the vicinity of Dhola area quicker than us, much to our detriment, as I have said already, snow would block all passes en route to their destination and all operations would be ruled out for six months or more. I informed Maj Gen Niranjan Pershad, Commander 4 Infantry Division the next day when I met him that I had done so.

I spent that night at Ziminthang—about seven miles from Khinzamane—and shared a hut with the Intelligence agent mentioned earlier.

6 *October*

Maj Gen Niranjan Pershad (known as N. P. hereafter) and I, accompanied by Lt Col Rao, flew in a helicopter early that morning up to Sirkhim, 9,000 feet high. Thereafter we trekked along tortuous ascents, for about two hours before we reached a point called 'Daldal' at an altitude of about 10,500 feet, where we had to go through a piece of quagmire for about half a mile. The soil was so soft that our feet sank at least eighteen inches and made going extremely difficult. We then came to a small hut at the base of Hathung La, from which point onwards we kept climbing for about three

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hours, puffing and panting till we reached the top of this pass which is about 15,000 feet. We saw there the usual Buddhist flags stuck on poles and fluttering in a strong breeze, as symbols to ward off evil spirits (which alas! it failed to do, in our case). After a steep descent and passing through nulla beds, full of slippery stones, and some very rough country, we reached Bridge 1—10,000 feet high—along the river Namkachu, at about 2030 hours. This bridge was held by a company of 2 Rajput. A track went from here to Khinzamane and bifurcated on the way to Thag La.

That night I remember N. P. telling me that in early August that year (more than a month before the Chinese incursion at Dhola took place) he had recommended to 33 Corps for permission to occupy the Thag La ridge but HQ Eastern Command (Lt Gen Sen) had not allowed him to do so. It was his contention that if he had occupied the Thag La ridge, which was our territory and which was free of the Chinese then, the latter could never have come to Dhola in September. He also said that only two days ago Sen had told him at Towang words to the effect: 'I [sic!] have sacked your Corps Commander (Umrao Singh) and you will now be getting a new Corps Commander (Kaul). If 7 Infantry Brigade do not get a move on, you know what to expect.' He was surprised that Lt Gen Sen had been giving different dates (29 September, 5 October and 10 October) in high level conferences at Delhi by which he (Sen) would be able to concentrate 7 Brigade around Dhola when he (N.P.) had pointed out the various difficulties in doing so all along.

Lt Col Misra, who met us at Bridge 1, explained the surrounding topography, the Chinese positions on the towering Thag La which stood opposite and their pattern of behaviour with which he had become familiar in the last few days. He related to us the relative strength of the Chinese which had by now become a Brigade group.

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7 October

After breakfast, I marched up to Bridge 2 which was held by 9 Punjab. All ranks of this battalion were in good spirits and they had built for themselves excellent positions. After a rough trek, I reached Dhola—the other name of which is Tse Dong—where I met Brigadier John Parshotam Dalvi, Commander 7 Infantry Brigade, who had reached there just before me, Lt Col Misra, O.C. 9 Punjab, who had come with me from Bridge 1 to here, Lt Col Rikh, O.C. 2 Rajput and Lt Col Ahluwalia, O.C. 1/9 Gorkhas.

I sent a message from here to Eastern Command and Army Headquarters the gist of which was:

(a) Conditions here could be called 'jungle warfare at high altitude.'
(b) We had occupied Bridge 5 without opposition and positioned one platoon at the temporary log bridge.
(c) We had occupied Tsangley without opposition.

After a few more hours of climbing 'snakes and ladders', I reached the Dhola Post—300 yards from Bridge 3—at 1400 hours that day. This post is 12,000 feet high and was dominated by the main enemy positions at a distance of 1,500 yards. Some of the surrounding mountains had a sprinkling of fresh snow on their peaks.

My first reactions were that the Dhola area was unsuitable from many viewpoints and should never have been selected for any operational purpose (defence or attack) by Lt Gen Sen or Brigadier Dalvi for the following reasons:

(i) Its lines of approach were difficult and unsatisfactory due to poor communications and hence the inaccessibility of this position.
(ii) Observation of mutual posts of our own and some enemy positions was not as good as it should have been. It, therefore, afforded indifferent field of fire.
(iii) Good mobility of our own troops was not possible due to poor communications.
(iv) A raging torrent lay right in front of our position as a difficult obstacle which was a great handicap.

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Even if Government had asked Lt Gen Sen to drive the Chinese from the vicinity of Dhola and take up a position in that area for this purpose, he should have represented to higher authorities the tactical, topographical and other difficulties of doing so from the area in question and should have threatened the Chinese from a more favourable position to himself.

The enemy was located along the Thag La ridge in an impressive array in numbers and material, which lay right under our nose and could be seen clearly. On the other hand, our troops remained short of supplies, weapons and equipment alike. Our position—selected by others before I took over command—was located in what seemed a dangerous low-lying trap. The Chinese overlooked us practically everywhere.

I later informed Headquarters, Eastern Command and Army Headquarters that:

(a) The bulk of our airdrops of supplies, ammunition and winter clothing were landing in inaccessible places.

(b) There were only three days' rations available with 2 Rajput and 1/9 Gorkhas and fifty rounds of small arms ammunition per man. Our mortars and ammunition were still in transit between Lumpu and here.

(c) Due to lack of winter clothing,[9] men of these two battalions were spending that night at a height of 15,000 feet in summer uniform with one blanket. (We were also short of boots.[10])

(d) There was an acute shortage of civil porters which, coupled with inaccurate airdrops, was slowing down the process of our logistical build-up.

(e) The labour I had commandeered from the Border Roads Orga-

9 Lt Gen Sen could have taken some urgent steps in a precarious situation to expedite the supply of the items of ammunition, rations and clothing of which his Forces were short, from the depots located under his own command to reach the Dhola area in time.

10 Deficiency in this item had persisted because Menon had resisted orders for boots being placed in the private sector.

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nization would take some days before they became available as they were spread over a distance of about 200 miles.

(f) Additional aircraft be placed at our disposal immediately for the task of airdrops.

(g) I was taking every possible step to evict the Chinese from our territory (despite many difficulties) as ordered.

(h) The Chinese with their better resources were likely to dislodge us from any position which we may initially capture.

We all spent the night 7/8 October at Dhola and discussed till quite late various operational situations which were likely to arise during the next few days.

8 *October*

After spending a restless night in which I slept very little, I walked up to Bridge 4,[11] 12,500 feet high, which was at a distance of about half a mile. It took me just over thirty minutes to cover this journey. Here the Commanding Officers of Infantry Battalions, the Brigade and Divisional Commanders and I had a long and interesting discussion. I had this pow-wow to make our plans together, appreciate each other's point of view in this tricky situation and to take some joint decisions, which we did.

While we were in the middle of this conference, the Chinese fired one burst of automatic rifle from about 400 yards away either to scare or provoke us into some hasty reaction. We took cover and wondered what was coming next. When nothing followed these solitary bangs, I ordered all present to assemble once again and carry on with our deliberations.

Brigadier Dalvi, Commander 7 Infantry Brigade, had stated in an appreciation as far back as 28 September 1962, submitted to 4 Infantry Division, that an attack was feasible from the left of Dhola with a firm base at Tsangley which should be secured as the first phase. When Eastern

11 Where Headquarters 7 Brigade was located. 2 Rajput and 1/9 Gorkhas were spread between Bridge 3 and 4.

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Command asked 33 Corps to expedite concentration of 7 Infantry Brigade in the Dhola area, 33 Corps in turn asked 4 Infantry Division (when pressed by Lt Gen Sen) on 9 September not to retard the date of concentration of 7 Infantry Brigade beyond 5 October 1962.

I approved the plan of Brigadier Dalvi, made by him before my arrival, of sending approximately a company, North of River Namkachu, in the area Tseng-Jong, which lay in our territory, on the 8th and occupy this position if they did not encounter any opposition, for the following reasons:

(a) Our troops had gone North of the River already, *before* I arrived on the scene, when Tsangley was occupied.

(b) If we had not occupied Tseng-Jong, when we did, the Chinese would have done so shortly afterwards (as there were such indications already before we occupied it) and threatened our position at the Log Bridge.

(c) Commander, 7 Infantry Brigade had stated in his appreciation on 28 September, six days before I took over, that his men would cross the River and occupy Tseng-Jong (suggestions have been wrongly made that I initiated this order). Even if I wanted to stop this move, it was too late for me to do so as when I reached there on the 8th, our company was already on the way to Tseng-Jong under orders of the Brigade Commander.

I later sent a message to Eastern Command and Army Headquarters containing the following points:

(i) That Tseng-Jong was occupied without opposition. The Chinese stronghold appeared to be between Thag La and Yumsto La at an altitude of approximately 14,000 feet over an area of 3,500 yards which dominated our position at Dhola and Bridge 4.

(ii) That the enemy had dug deep bunkers in this area and prepared dummy alternative positions in addition to their main defence covering our likely approaches from Tseng-Jong-Karpo La side on the left and Bridge 1-Khinzamane on the right.

(iii) That in view of the paucity of rations available, I had asked all ranks to observe an austerity scale till further orders.

It was Dussehra today!

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9 *October*

I received a message from Army Headquarters which said they had reliably learnt that 300 mortars and guns were seen moving towards us near Tsona-Dzong and that the Chinese might launch an attack on Towang. To this I replied that presumably the Army Headquarters were taking suitable steps to meet this threat as I was already facing much heavier odds than could be coped with by the resources available to me in this threatre.

I went round our position at Bridge 4 and generally made myself familiar with the surroundings. Brigadier Dalvi told me how glad he was that I had done this. He went on to say that he and his troops realized how much I sympathized with their difficulties, being the first General Officer to have taken the trouble to come up here.

Going around some of our localities, I was constrained to point out to Brigadier Dalvi how well prepared the Chinese positions were just across the river, with which his positions compared unfavourably. Lt Col D. S. Rao and some others heard me say so. Dalvi's positions were neither well sited nor suitably camouflaged and his shelters and bunkers were not strong enough to withstand intensive enemy artillery and mortar shelling. Also, except for 9 Punjab, few others had good knowledge of the ground in this area, as they had just arrived there. I saw that Dalvi did not like my telling him what I did. As a senior commander, I had to point out the faults I saw, specially in an operational area. I was not there to pat people on the back even in their errors. I believe that command does not consist of remaining a mere spectator. Senior officers cannot remain as puppets or post offices. Orders given in an emergency when men's lives are threatened do not have to travel like an office file through normal channels. When time is of consequence, it becomes urgent to act immediately. (There were numerous examples where many subordinate officers had to be removed from command by their

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superiors in the Indo-Pakistan conflict in 1965 for lapses.)

That afternoon I impressed on all officers and JCOs of 7 Brigade in a short talk the importance of our task and my faith in their ability to carry it out. They all seemed in good heart.

I received an official message from the Army Chief in the evening to say that both he and the Government of India had full confidence in me.

I sent a message to Eastern Command and Army Headquarters asking them to increase the number of aircraft for dropping supplies and equipment in view of the urgency of our logistics keeping pace with our operational build-up.

After a hard day's work, N. P. and I came to our bunker. I was dictating an important message for HQ Eastern Command to Lt Col Rao. Brig K. K. Singh and Major Tilak Malhotra had just reached Bridge 4 at the end of a gruelling march. We then decided to stretch ourselves a bit and had hardly relaxed a few minutes when we heard a loud explosion near our bunker. In another attempt to provoke us to take some precipitous action or just for fun, the Chinese had thrown a grenade at us. N. P. thought that I was too senior an officer to be in such forward positions at these heights for long and now that the Chinese had made two attempts by accident or by design, threatening my personal safety, I should leave this area at once. I explained to him that my going away from there at that stage, whatever the threat, would be misunderstood by the troops, specially when one of the reasons for which I had gone there was to share such situations with my men and that I would consider returning after another day here.

10 *October*

The day dawns in this part of the world very early. It was about 0430 hours when I was getting ready and my batman was boiling water for tea. I had hung my mirror on the branch of a tree near my bunker just above Bridge 4 and had

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started shaving when I heard considerable fire from across the river. N. P. rushed out of the bunker and asked me what it was all about. Shortly afterwards, we gathered that the Chinese had opened fire on the routine morning patrol of 9 Punjab near Tseng-Jong not far from Dhola and North of river Namkachu. I hurriedly completed my shave and came down on the track near Bridge 4 along with N. P. I saw the 2 Rajput rushing towards the Log Bridge as they had been ordered the previous day to take over that position as also the one at Tseng-Jong. The situation, from our point of view, at the time, was rather precarious. Most of this Brigade had been on an austerity scale of rations during the last few days. Our troops were short of boots and winter clothing apart from weapons and ammunition. There were many cases of pneumonia among them as they wore olive green (summer) kit at these heights and in this cold. Our diminutive Dropping Zone at Tsangdhar led to our air drops of essential material including rations falling into inaccessible areas.

At Bridges 1, 2 and 3 we had no medium machine gun available. At Bridge 4 there were two and later four medium machine guns with ammunition enough for less than half an hour's normal rate of fire. We had only fifty rounds per rifle and 500 rounds per light machine gun; we had two 3-inch mortars at Bridge 2 and two at Bridge 4 and two 75 mm guns intact and two damaged at Tsangdhar. The Chinese had considerable superiority over us in weapons and men.

A battalion of the Chinese approximately 500 strong, with ample supporting fire assaulted our position at Tseng-Jong where we had just over 50 men occupying a dominating position. There was heavy exchange of fire and our men repulsed wave after wave of the Chinese attacks. A section of 9 Punjab had taken up a position at Karpo La II, just above Tseng-Jong, without being noticed by the Chinese. They opened fire from that lofty position and took the

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enemy completely by surprise, inflicting many casualties. Major Chaudhuri, our Company Commander, was slightly wounded in the arm, but volunteered to carry on in the battle. He later asked Lt Col Misra, his C. O., for machine gun and mortar support from Bridge 4. Misra asked Brigadier Dalvi who told him he was watching the battle from Bridge 4 area and did not agree that any mortar or machine gun support should be given as he felt sure that the latter would be out of range and only bring heavier reprisals from the Chinese with their superior resources. (This matter was never referred to me—as it need not have been—nor did I give any orders on this subject, as has been suggested by some.)

As I was standing on the track talking to Major Malhotra, Lt Col Rikh, C. O. 2 Rajput, in charge of this position shouted at me: 'You better take some cover, Sir.' He was himself standing exposed. There was much din and noise of the battle at Tseng-Jong which lay just across the river. Our men were rushing up to various positions.

Later that morning, the Chinese re-formed and supported by mortars, attacked our positions at Tseng-Jong from three directions. There was hand to hand fighting shortly afterwards. The Brigade Commander, after some hours, asked the Company to withdraw on the South of the River. Our men pulled back towards Bridge 5 (as the log bridge was threatened) wading through the river. We had six dead, eleven wounded and five missing. The Peking radio announced the Chinese casualties as about 100.

This was the first time that China had engaged herself in a battle with us in the real sense In the past, there had only been spasmodic skirmishes between us. It was therefore, not India but China who started this war.[12] We had only occupied Tseng-Jong, North of Namkachu, unopposed and a place which was in our own territory. Here I

12 See letter from Chester Bowles to me, as mentioned earlier.

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must say that if there was only one post we had the resources to occupy in this area, we should have occupied Thag La instead of Dhola (as had been recommended clearly by 33 Corps to the Eastern Command, as far back as July 1962—specially when the territory from North of Dhola to South of Thag La was ours—but which recommendation Sen had turned down).

I had now seen with my own eyes the superior resources of the Chinese in the battle that morning, and the untenability of our position in Dhola area located in a hollow. I was also advised by my Divisional Commander that I should go to Delhi and ask the Army Headquarters and the Government not to press us to 'expel' the Chinese from this area, a task which was far beyond our capacity and that we should occupy a position where we could be better placed vis-a-vis the enemy. Dalvi also had the same view. I agreed both with the Divisional and the Brigade Commander. I then told N.P. that the instructions to drive the enemy back were to be held in abeyance till I returned from Delhi. In the meantime, he was to hold his present position.

I sent a message to Eastern Command and Army Headquarters that a grave situation had developed that day at Tseng-Jong and in our area generally (the Chinese had attacked us on a big scale for the first time). The fact that they had suffered more casualties than us that day was no yard stick by which to judge the situation.

It was my estimate that the Chinese had by now deployed a Division against 7 Brigade. I had personally seen about two battalions coming across the Thag La on to the vicinity of Bridges 3 and 4 in the last two days. I also pointed out the threat developing against the Towang sector and suggested I should visit Delhi and put before the Army Chief and Government a first hand account of the situation which prevailed there.

Frankly speaking, I had now fully understood all the implications of our predicament and a few things stood out

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a mile. A wrong position had been chosen[13] from where to fight; in spite of all my efforts I had failed to adequately concentrate logistics for 7 Brigade in this area in time; in view of this and other handicaps which would persist, I thought we should reconsider the whole of our position in this theatre.

I got back a reply from Army Headquarters to come to Delhi forthwith.

Tseng-Jong was a battalion or a Brigade battle. Although G.O.C. 4 Infantry Division and I were near Headquarters 7 Infantry Brigade, we did not interfere with the activities of the latter. We were not in a position to reinforce our company at Tseng-Jong as we were already thin on the ground all along. We had occupied this position in the hope that so long as we held a particular piece of ground, it would remain ours and unchallenged—as in the past.

We could not support our troops at Tseng-Jong with medium machine gun fire from Bridge 4 as they were out of range and as we had little ammunition. Neither Commander 4 Division, 7 Brigade nor I were in favour of enlarging the scope of this battle because of our many shortages at the time.

I, along with some members of my staff, walked back from Dhola traversing this difficult territory and climbed the strenuous ascent of the Hathung La once again. It became dark near the hut just before the pass where we decided to spend the night. Here I felt a severe pain in my chest. As the night advanced and the cold increased, I experienced more and more difficulty in breathing. Pain in my chest grew severer and I felt choked. My companions sent for a Medical Officer from Bridge 1 which was located about three thousand feet below. The unfortunate doctor had to struggle up this gradient at about 2200 hours but on arrival failed to diagnose my malady. I did not sleep a wink that night. It was bitterly cold.

13 By others before I assumed command of this Corps.

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11 *October*

I was between the devil and the deep sea. If I had stayed on where I was, I would have probably died of exposure and the effects of my disease. On the other hand, going on in this sick condition was also fraught with risks. I, however, decided to resume my trek at about 4 in the morning although I was in great pain. I was literally carried up to the top of Hathung La. When I got my second breath, I virtually ran down to Sirkhim via Daldal (the quagmire) as I was anxious to keep to my schedule. I thanked the Lord that there was a helicopter awaiting at Sirkhim to take me back to Tezpur. Although I was feeling feverish, I had a hot bath which I had not had for days and needed badly and wore some clean clothes once again. Just before I flew to Delhi, I took my temperature and found it was 102. I told no one that I had fever or any other trouble lest I landed in a hospital! I was determined to stick it out as best as I could.

When I arrived at the Palam airfield at about eight that evening, I got a message that there would be a meeting in the Prime Minister's house later that night where I should proceed.

I found Nehru in the chair in this meeting. Among others present were Krishna Menon, the Army and the Air Chiefs, the Cabinet, Foreign and Defence Secretaries. I told them what I had observed in the Dhola area where I had recently spent four days and seen a battle the day before. I described our various shortages and the Chinese advantages over us in many ways. I explained the unsuitability of the position we had taken up along the river Namkachu, that it was in a gorge with no room for manoeuvre, that it was dominated by the Chinese all along and was untenable. I finally pointed out that:

(a) If we attacked the Chinese, as things stood then, we were bound to have a reverse. We should, therefore, pull out of Dhola and go to a more suitable area tactically from where we could fight them better.

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(b) The Dhola area would soon be snow-bound when it would be impossible to maintain it any longer.

(c) Whatever build-up we might achieve opposite Thag La, the enemy, with their superior resources and approach, could oust us (and in this process weaken us at our other fronts).

(d) The Chinese were in a better position to build up a superior Force due to good communications behind their forward position, an advantage we did not enjoy.

(The Chinese had about four Divisions opposite NEFA as opposed to our one Division (less a Brigade) at the time and ten Divisions in Tibet. They had fairly modern weapons and excellent logistics. We were quite the opposite in these respects.)

In view of these considerations I asked for orders on:

(a) Whether I should continue building up this sector and launch an attack on the Chinese despite their superiority and a possibility of a reverse;

(b) Or to cancel the orders of an attack but hold our present positions.

(c) Or to hold a (more advantageous) position elsewhere.

I told all present that my troops were willing to do as ordered. Government, however, must bear in mind the consequences.

When Nehru asked Thapar and Sen for their views, they both agreed with the proposal at *(b)* above but not with *(c)*.

Nehru said that if odds were against us and if I as the Commander on the spot felt as I did, he agreed that instead of attacking the Chinese under these circumstances, we should hold on to our present positions.

The meeting dispersed later that night. I then had a temperature of 103 and was experiencing great difficulty in breathing. No one knew the ordeal I was going through.

12 *October*

I spent this day with General Thapar, the Army Chief, and with others at Army Headquarters to tie up some important problems concerning my Corps.

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13 *October*

I returned to HQ 4 Corps at Tezpur and heard of the statement which Nehru made to the press just before going to Ceylon. *He said he had given orders to the Army to drive the Chinese out of our territory in* NEFA. This was contrary to the orders he had given me on the night of 11 October in the conference held at his residence where he had told me, in the presence of the Army Chief, that instead of attacking the Chinese, which we were not in a position to do, we should hold on to our present positions. (For Tsangley, see remarks under 'October 14/15/16'.)

It is a 64 Dollar question why Nehru[14] made this contradictory statement on the 13th. Did he do it on his own in the belief that India was strong enough, or was he advised to do so? No General who knew the serious military situation confronting us in NEFA and Ladakh at the time could have ever advised him to do so. (See my remarks and recommendations under '11 October' and comments under '14 September', particularly under '22 September'.) It is my surmise that Nehru took up a posture of 'courage' when he knew that we were militarily weak, in the hope that with this bold (though contradictory) statement, the Chinese might be deterred from attacking India. He might also have been advised by one of his political confidants to make such a statement for public consumption for psychological reasons. The Chinese would have struck us anyhow; if not then, perhaps later. But I wonder if Nehru's statement did *not* precipitate their attack.

I sent an order to Commander, 4 Infantry Division,

14 Despite the traumatic shock administered to Nehru by the treacherous aggression of the Chinese, he might have taken a more realistic line in dealing with this crisis but was submerged by the vociferous clamour of his followers and bitter taunts of his opponents and was perhaps driven by someone to say in October 1962 that he had instructed the Army to expel the Chinese out of our territory. This statement of Nehru might have given the Chinese the flimsy excuse to say later that we attacked them first.

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which included the following points:

(a) The Bridges along Namkachu from 1 to temporary (Log) Bridge will be held (in the South) at all costs.
(b) Line of communications via Lumpu will be protected.
(c) Hathung La (South of Namkachu) will be held.
(d) Positions at Tsangley will be held at the discretion of GOC, 4 Division.

I had given these orders a few days earlier verbally but now confirmed them in writing.

14, 15 *and* 16 *October*

It was my plan to go forward once again to the Towang and Dhola sectors on the 18th. Before I went there, I tied up various logistical and operational details. I informed Eastern Command and Army Headquarters of our various difficulties due to shortage of aircraft available for this purpose. I said the Air Force were not able to fulfil this task with their present resources and suggested they made additional Mark IV Dakotas or Carribous available to them; or, to let a civilian concern, who were maintaining our posts in NEFA till recently, have, for this purpose, additional and suitable aircraft made available by Government. I pointed out the logistical and other difficulties of maintaining our post at Tsangley. I added that since the battle of Tseng-Jong on 10 October, the enemy had taken up strong positions of up to a battalion strength in its vicinity, and might liquidate Tsangley. I, therefore, recommended to them that we should give preference to discretion over prestige and pull back our isolated company from Tsangley south of Namkachu (in larger military interests).

17 *October*

The Defence Minister, the Army Chief and the Army Commander flew to Tezpur on the 17th morning. Krishna Menon emphasized to me in the presence of the Army

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Chief, the Army Commander and some members of my staff that it was politically important for us to hold on to Tsangley as it was situated near the Tri-junction, a point where India, Bhutan and Tibet borders met. I told him that whatever the political significance in this matter, militarily this task was impossible, unless he provided additional resources to me in men and material, for this task. I argued at length against the possibility of holding Tsangley, lying North of the River Namkachu, in the presence of Thapar and Sen but in vain. So I had to fritter away my lean resources in holding the position at Tsangley.

After the dignitaries returned to Delhi in the evening, I was taken seriously ill. The local medical officer gave me some medicines but my condition kept deteriorating. At night, I felt an unbearable pain in my chest, had great difficulty in breathing and could hardly speak. When my condition became precarious, *and despite my insistence against this step,* Brigadier Pachnanda and Lt Col Rao conveyed the fact that I was so ill telephonically to Brigadier Palit, Director Military Operations at Army Headquarters, Delhi. The latter informed General Thapar who in turn brought this news to the notice of the Defence Minister. Pachnanda and Rao sat throughout that night by my bed side.

18 *October*

Colonel H. B. Lal, the medical specialist, appeared at Tezpur early that morning and said in the presence of Lt Col Rao and Brigadier Pachnanda as also some others, that the Defence Minister *and the Army Chief* had sent him in a special plane to Tezpur to have a look at me. After examining me, Lal told me that in his opinion I must be evacuated to Delhi for immediate and a more thorough diagnosis and treatment. I argued with Lal, whom I knew well for years, that I would prefer not to be evacuated to Delhi in view of the serious military situation which confronted me at the

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moment. Lal said he would have never suggested my temporary evacuation to Delhi—where the best facilities for a diagnosis were available—unless my condition was so bad and promised that he would send me back here within a matter of a very few days. He told me that Menon and Thapar thought I should be brought back to Delhi for a careful check-up. He pointed out that my present condition would get worse in the humid climate of Tezpur. I then agreed reluctantly to accompany him to Delhi on this condition. But before I flew, I rang up HQ Eastern Command and asked Lt Gen Sen for his permission to go to Delhi for treatment, as advised by Lal. Lt Gen Sen agreed. This telephone conversation took place in the presence of Brigadier K. K. Singh, my BGS. I mention this fact here because it has been maliciously stated by some that I flew away to Delhi without the Army Commander's permission and under direct orders of the Defence Minister. When I reached Delhi that night I was taken straight home and went to the military hospital for a thorough medical check-up the next morning.

19 *October*

Brigadier (now Major General) Inder Singh, the Chief Physician of the Armed Forces, examined me at length. My X-rays were taken, electro-cardiogram done and my blood tested. My pulse rate was 106 and my blood pressure 190/120. I was told I had contracted, due to physical over-exertion, at high altitudes, a serious variety of odema (enlargement of the heart and water in both the lungs). On hearing the details of my doings in the last fortnight, Inder Singh thought that when I first felt the signs of this ailment at the Hathung La on the 10th evening, I should have taken complete rest there for a while, instead of which I had undergone considerable exertion and strain. *It was, according to him, a miracle that I was alive.* He ordered me to bed straightaway and said, that after a thorough check-

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up, he thought I should have complete rest and stay in bed for quite sometime. A soldier was put outside my room to stop all visitors from seeing me as I was so ill. Here I was being tricked by Fate, for people's tongues were going to wag once more, on account of my illness and the 'sentry' much to my discredit.

I was told later (when I got back to Tezpur after my illness on 29 October) that the Chinese were observed to build up furiously in the Thag La area during the period 15-19 October. Whereas we damaged some out of the few guns we paradropped at Tsangdhar, the Chinese brought theirs across the Thag La loaded on animals opposite bridges 3 and 4. We, on the other hand, never managed to achieve this feat across the Hathung La of almost equal height, as we neither procured sufficient animals for this purpose nor questioned the theory which some of our experts advanced that our animals could not climb these heights. (All this happened before I came here just on the eve of the massive Chinese attack when it was already too late to take any more steps than I did.) The Chinese had a good road up to Le,[15] north of Thag La. They must have discovered later, when they overran our territories, that Towang to Ziminthang was about thirty-five miles, Ziminthang to Bridge 1 fifteen and Bridge 1 to Bridge 5 about seven miles, all connected by tracks only. (Our nearest road-head was about sixty miles away at Towang, whereas the Chinese road came to within about ten miles from Thag La.)

As a matter of policy, we had orders at the highest military level, not to build roads within close vicinity of our borders. In pursuance of this policy we were forced to look for labour—to carry our loads—which was not available in sufficient numbers.

15 Our troops had observed a jeep in the Thag La area on the 19th which means that a Chinese military V.I.P. must have visited their main positions a day before their attack on the 20th.

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Moreover, we had started building our roads even up to Towang quite recently which we should have done at least five years earlier, like the Chinese had done. (Border Roads as an organization was born in 1960) And every so often, financial sanctions for our road construction were held up for months in prolonged meetings and ceaseless administrative wrangles instead of Government granting us emergency sanctions in a situation like this. We woke up too late and too slowly. The Chinese began their preparations from Tibet towards our borders probably as far back as 1955 with great advantage.

The Chinese had occupied Dum Dum La opposite Tsangley, by a battalion, on the 17th. This was a sensitive spot through which one could go towards Thag La. On the 18th they had sent a patrol from Dum Dum La towards Bridge 5 position. Our men from Bridge 5 fired upon them and one Chinese was killed. Before burying him we found that he was not a soldier, but probably a Political Commissar. On the 19th at about 1700 hours, our Post at Tsangdhar reported that they had noticed about 2,000 Chinese moving from Thag La towards Tsangley. This was also reported by 2 Rajput from Bridge 4 and the Log Bridge. Brigadier Dalvi thought Tsangley was to be the China's next target. As it had already started snowing here, Dalvi had pressed Maj Gen Niranjan Pershad who had represented to Lt Gen Sen that his Brigade should get back to Lumpu for logistical reasons, by 25 October.

I had great physical distress during that night and felt extreme difficulty in breathing as also pain in my heart and chest.

20 *October*

I woke up early that morning and felt terribly ill. It was not nine yet when my telephone bell rang and Brigadier K.K. Singh spoke to me from Tezpur. He said he was sorry to inform me that the Chinese had launched a massive

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attack against 7 Brigade positions in the Dhola area early that morning. Hand to hand fighting was still going on and no clear details were available. He said he would report to me further later that day. Here I lay seriously ill and helpless while my men were going through this ordeal.

I heard later that at about 0400 hours that morning Tsangley had reported some firing by the Chinese. At about 0430 hours, two Red Verey Lights were fired near the Chinese gun positions opposite Bridge 4, perhaps as a signal for the Chinese attack[16] to start. Many mortars and guns then started firing towards Bridge 3 and 4 as also towards Tsangdhar and the Chinese crossed the Nam-kachu River at various points between Bridges 3, 4 and the Log Bridge simultaneously soon after first light.

The Chinese Regiment, seen a day before going towards Tsangley, now started climbing Tsangdhar. At about 0830 hours they were just below that position. The Chinese, in much larger numbers and with many more weapons, then launched a spirited attack on our positions at Bridge 3 and 4. After some fighting, they overwhelmed these positions (occupied by 2 Rajput and 1/9 Gorkhas).

By 0700 hours Brigadier Dalvi's Brigade Headquarters position, which he had established a few days ago, between Bridges 2 and 3, was overrun. I heard from an eye witness that it had not been prepared effectively. Parachutes had been put around the bushes and made into shelters against rain. Few trenches had been dug and hardly any defensive positions made.

Our lines of communication were cut off earlier that morning at various places. The Brigade wireless set closed down at 0600 hours. By 0800 hours two Assam Rifles men

16 The enemy can attack a position at any time of the day or the night, depending upon many factors but usually an assault takes place soon before or after first or last light (dawn or dusk), when one is either getting ready for the day or, after a day's work, for rest.

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reached Bridge 2 and told 9 Punjab that Bridges 3 and 4 had fallen to the enemy who had also captured Khinzamane by then.

9 Punjab patrol, which had gone from Bridge 2 to Bridge 3, came back by 0900 hours and reported that our Brigade Headquarters was to be found nowhere and the area was now full of Chinese.

The Tsangdhar Battle

The Chinese engaged this position with their artillery and mortar fire from 0500 hours onwards. Our guns had retaliated but had little ammunition. The Chinese attacked Tsangdhar soon after. The weak company of Gorkhas which was protecting our gun positions here put up a stout resistance. In the meantime, 4 Division sent a helicopter with a wireless set and a Signals Officer,who on landing, found the Chinese all over. The pilot, Flight Lieutenant Sehgal, was presumably, shot dead and the helicopter captured by the Chinese. Tsangdhar fell before 1100 hours.

From here the enemy moved via Karpo La 1 to Lumpu where they reached by the afternoon of the 21st. They also came beyond Bridges 1 to 4 to Hathung La and Khinzamane the same day. They went to Lumpu by different routes. They left Lumpu and Khinzamane on the 22nd via Shakti for Towang.

Our company at Tsangley withdrew to Tashi Gong Zong in neighbouring Bhutan as Tsangdhar was occupied by the Chinese. Maj Gen Niranjan Pershad was now issuing orders to all units of the Brigade from Lumpu because the Brigade Commander had been captured. N.P. ordered that 9 Punjab was to occupy Hathung La. 4 Grenadier were ordered to stay on at Bridge 1 and withdrew to Hathung La in the evening. Hathung La fell on the 21st morning. 9 Punjab withdrew to Lumpu and across Yumla to Tashi Gong Zong. The Grenadiers, the Gorkhas and the

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Rajputs also went the same way. They underwent great privations en route having to go over altitudes of 16,000 to 17,000 feet—in bitter cold, with insufficient clothing, starving and often being sick during this gruelling withdrawal. Most elements of the Brigade had reached Darranga by the seventh of November.

22 October

Lt Gen Sen went to Towang on 22 October 1962. Soon after his arrival there, the Chinese threatened Towang and Jang, by approximately a Division from the following directions:

(a) Lum La-Towang
(b) Bum La-Towang
(c) Khinzamane-Somatso-Towang
(d) Bum La-Landa-Jang

Lt Gen Sen gave orders to withdraw the Towang garrison to south of Jang, as he felt it might be encircled and destroyed by the enemy. He then left Towang hurriedly. (The enemy occupied Towang unopposed on the 25th, when I was lying ill at Delhi.)

The Chinese and the Pakistan Radio broadcasts suggested maliciously that I and some other Commanders had fled from the battlefield. And, ironically, some of my countrymen exploited this propaganda for political and personal reasons, took up these lies and spread them like wild fire as if they were the enemy's agents. Instead of presenting a united front at this critical juncture, many sections of the public and the press decried Nehru, Menon and I, and held us responsible for the present situation. Some of them even said that I had advised the Government to take on the Chinese. They went on to say that my appointment as Commander, 4 Corps, adversely affected the morale of my men! (I had only commanded 4 Corps for

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a fortnight till then, whilst others had been there in command of this theatre far, far longer. Morale of thousands of troops could not have deteriorated by my presence over-night.) In fact, uncharitable references[17] to me reached their climax when a rumour was spread that I was under house arrest. (The perpetrators of this vilification might have helped in assassinating my character, which was their desire, but they also helped, in the process, in strengthening the enemy's efforts to weaken the morale of our people and especially of our troops, in the middle of a war. They could, instead, have rendered greater service to India by going to the front themselves at the time, in some capacity, or the other and thus given better evidence of their patriotism.)

23 to 25 October

Nehru and Menon came to see me at my house on the 23rd or so. After inquiring about my health, they asked me—in my personal[18] capacity—to suggest ways and means of evicting the Chinese from our territories. I made three concrete suggestions: firstly, to reorganize the command and control set-up of the Indian Army in view of the prevailing situation along the Himalayas; secondly, to raise substantial Forces within our own resources speedily and thirdly to seek military aid from some foreign power or powers. I made the last suggestion as I was convinced that it was, under the circumstances, necessary for us to do so. Nehru and Menon did not appear then to be enamoured of my suggestion for foreign aid, though they agreed to the immediate expansion of our Forces.

17 One newspaper said a little later that I ran the NEFA battle from my sick bed. The facts are that I was sick for about ten days. I did send one order from Delhi to 4 Corps whilst I was ill, concerning the post at Tsangley near the Tri-junction only on receiving some instructions from higher military authorities. In any case, after five days of my sickness, Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh was appointed to officiate for me.

18 Some others were consulted in their personal capacity also, in this time of stress.

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I do not know whether our deteriorating operational situation itself (the fall of Towang?) or some other factors influenced Menon and Nehru to have second thoughts on the subject. But Menon came to me on the 26th in an agitated state of mind and asked me to reduce to writing briefly the suggestions I had made the previous day, as soon as possible. I then dictated a short paper, from my sick bed, after consulting a few experts on various matters, on what additional (including mountain) formations we required and what reorganizations in our set-up we should carry out. Cabinet Secretary Khera came to my house whilst I was still ill and collected this paper from me. I later prepared a list of what additional weapons and equipment we required to import. Government did expand our Army and also asked for foreign military aid but only when it was too late. If Nehru, Menon and some others had acted in time, as represented by the Army repeatedly earlier, there might have been a different story to tell.

[After I suggested to Nehru and Menon that we should get foreign military aid, Sarin, the energetic Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, spoke, quite independently, a little later, to M. J. Desai, the Foreign Secretary, advocating that our Prime Minister should make an appeal to all the nations of the world for military aid at this critical hour. Desai spoke to Nehru who ultimately made such an appeal to all nations including Pakistan. Whereas U.S.A., U.K., Canada, Australia and a few others agreed to send material military aid, about seventy-five countries gave us their moral support. Before the weapons and equipment thus received could be issued to our units and formations in NEFA (or Ladakh) in any appreciable measure and we could train on them, the war was over!]

Thapar saw me three or four times between the 19th and 24th. He said he needed me as C.G.S. once again and that instead of reverting to my command, I should come back to him. My view was that for me to give up an active

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command so soon after taking it over and specially after a reverse in battle and to accept an office job instead, whatever the reasons, would smack of either a punishment or evasive action on my part and hence, I said, was out of the question. I said I must go back to my men in the field, whatever the odds. Thapar agreed.

26/29 October

I asked Brigadier Inder Singh on the 26th to let me return to my command in NEFA. He said medically speaking, he could not let me do so for another few weeks, as my condition was still far from satisfactory. I told him that I understood the medical aspect but could he not consider the human factors in my case: the country's fate hung in the balance; and there was all the virulent propaganda against me. I, therefore, felt it was better to risk my life than my name. Inder Singh, a sensitive man himself and a gentleman, apart from being an outstanding physician, understood this point and told me that in view of what I said, he would let me go back to the operations in NEFA on the 29th, though I had not fully recovered. He added, however, that I was not to climb hills—an order I defied within a day or two of reaching Tezpur—as I had little option. I was delighted he had reacted favourably to my request. I was allowed to walk a little on the 28th. Determined to get back to my post, I flew to Tezpur on the 29th once again!

Falling seriously ill—which was described by my detractors as feigning illness—was beyond my control. Rejoining duty before I had fully recovered was all I could do in the circumstances. My health, however, did not prevent me from participating in operational activities. But it was neither my sickness nor convalescence which brought our reverses in Dhola, Towang, Tse La, Bomdi La and Walong. Their causes lay deeper, which some people knew but preferred to conveniently ignore.

When I entered my headquarters at Tezpur, I found

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Niranjan Pershad waiting for me. Although he had been ordered to report to Delhi forthwith, he insisted that he would do so only after he had an interview with me. He was peeved and confided in me that Lt Gen Sen had done him grave injustice. He had been relieved of his command because Lt Gen Sen had reported to the Army Chief that he betrayed lack of leadership during the recent action. (I can say that I never saw any signs of that whilst N. P. was with me.)

N. P. then gave me a written representation addressed to higher authorities which I forwarded with favourable remarks. He eventually interviewed the President of India, in his capacity as Supreme Commander of the Forces, was vindicated and appointed as Chief of Staff, 15 Corps.

29 *October*

The *New York Times* in its editorial on 13 October 1962 had said: 'Lt General Kaul, considered one of India's toughest and ablest soldiers, has been put in command of a special Corps in NEFA.' This paper wrote on me again on 29 October 1962: '...He has a reputation for courage, resourcefulness and untiring energy. He saw active service against the Japanese in Burma during World War II and in Kashmir in 1948.... Many times he has volunteered for hazardous undertakings. (For instance) in 1955 he went to the snowbound Rohtang Pass to help rescue...some... men trapped on the other side of the Pass. In 1960, he went on foot onto remote outposts in Naga hills, NEFA, Sikkim and Ladakh.... In Ladakh he visited these outposts and nearly lost his life when a wind blast almost blew his plane (helicopter) into a huge glacier.'

30 *October—7 November*

As dictated by the prevailing situation, but against medical advice I visited Walong and Tse La garrisons during this period and discussed the operational situations

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on both these fronts with the two Divisional Commanders concerned in relation to the ground. I also worked out at my Corps Headquarters many other operational and administrative details.

I do not know what made Krishna Menon forbid Indian or foreign journalists visiting our forward areas in NEFA. Many of them pressed me for permission which if given would have been contrary to 'Government' instructions. It was one of Menon's personal orders. These journalists—Indian and foreign—were more than restive as they had come from all over the place and were keen to cover our activities even at the risk of their lives. I therefore ignored Menon's orders on the subject and sent some of these journalists, to our forward posts (later). Edward Behr[19] of the *Time,* whose socks a cow had eaten the night before in Tezpur, while he slept, was one of them. He later wrote, after a trip to our forward areas: 'No devilish imagination could ever plan such testing ground for troops or transport.' Behr had served in the Indian Army for three years as a British Officer during World War II.

8 *November*

At this stage I must mention that when I worked out my previous operational plans, Brigadier K. K. Singh, my Brigadier General Staff, gave me invaluable assistance in this task. In addition, he was a pillar of strength to me in some critical situations which arose later.

I sent a message to Eastern Command and Army Headquarters on 8 November in which I appreciated that three

19 On hearing that I had voluntarily retired from the Indian Army, Behr wrote to me: 'There are quite a few people who were in India in October and November last year who remain aware of your tremendously difficult problems and of your Generalship and who are sure that no one could have done better, given the overwhelming disadvantages with which you were faced. . . .' Behr was by now the contributory editor of the *Saturday Evening Post* in France.

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threats were developing on my front :

(a) The enemy was in the process of building up two Divisions in Towang area and was likely to make an attempt to outflank our Tse La position by enveloping movements from the East and West of the main axis.

(b) The enemy was building up in strength against Machuka and was likely to isolate our position in that sector.

(c) The enemy was in the process of concentrating one Division against Walong-Hayuliang.

I also reported that Walong was attacked for the fourth time on 7 November. I pointed out that our induction of personnel and material to the requisite sectors was being held up due to an acute shortage of one-ton vehicles and transport aircraft. I mentioned in this signal in confirmation of what I had told the Army Chief and the Army Commander on 7 November during their visit to Tezpur that there was a requirement of two additional Divisions and necessary supporting arms to cope with the threats indicated above. I was only given one additional Brigade instead, by 17 November. (Though another Division came later, it was too late). I, therefore, neither had the requisite troops, weapons nor the logistical support for my task.

The Army Headquarters had two reasons due to which they were unable to give me additional support. Government had not permitted Thapar so far to pull out any formations from the Pakistan front in the Punjab or Kashmir, the only areas from which he could reinforce me effectively. Secondly, Army Headquarters had hardly any more additional road or air transport left for induction and maintenance. My Corps had been built up from two Brigades to two weak Divisions. An additional Division came, but only after Tse La and Bomdi La had fallen.

My requirements on 8 November were for 260 tons of air maintenance daily for 2 and 4 Divisions respectively and for 1200 one-ton lorries (4 lots of 300 vehicles for a four-

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day turn-round from Misamari to Tse La and back). Instead, I only had a total of approximately 300 one-ton vehicles at the time. The Air Force due to shortage of transport aircraft were able to drop sixty to eighty tons a day instead of 260. Our build-up was therefore much slower than it should have been.

9—11 *November*

I issued two operational instructions to Commander 4 and 2 Infantry Divisions—both Pathania's by name—on 9 and 11 November respectively (the gist of which I had given to the Army Commander and the Army Chief earlier in Tezpur). I said in these instructions that the enemy was in the habit of engaging our defensive localities frontally whereas the main attack was delivered from the rear and of simultaneous interception of our road/track communications in back areas. I forecast to G.O.C. 4 Division in my operational instruction referred to above that having cleared the main objective of Towang and after an adequate build-up, I expected the enemy would resume his advance south of Towang Chu River after which his next objective was likely to be Bomdi La. I said I expected the enemy's likely actions as follows:

(a) To encircle our covering troops at Nuranag and gain contact with our troops at Tse La.
(b) Cut our communications at Senge and attack Tse La from the rear.
(c) Capture Dirang Dzong.
(d) Capture Bomdi La via La-Thungri Dzong.

This is generally what happened.

I ordered him to hold Nuranag with his covering troops and dominate the line of Towang Chu River as also to hold Tse La and Bomdi La. I also directed that he should provide mobile resources at one or two places on the road communications to Tse La to liquidate enemy infiltrations on

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the main road. I instructed him to block the various ingresses into Bomdi La from the West and North of the main road. To generate offensive spirit amongst troops, he was directed to organize offensive patrols for gaining information as also for building up morale.

In my operational instruction to G.O.C. 2 Division, issued on 11 November, I forecast that the enemy would try to concentrate a Division against our garrison in Walong which he would attack soon. It was, therefore, imperative for us to continue to deny him observations of our air landing grounds in Walong. In the same instruction I told G.O.C. 2 Division that it was my intention to build up his garrison at Walong up to two Brigade Groups as soon as the logistical situation permitted me to do so.

I will now describe some battles which took place under my command in NEFA during November 1962. Our confrontation with the Chinese boiled down to the following facts. They had larger Forces available in Tibet as also all along our border than we had at our disposal in India or at our frontiers. Their tactics and improvisations were sound and their weapons, equipment and logistics, particularly communications, were better than ours. They could therefore reinforce their position quicker than us and what with other advantages over us, won the day.

The Battle of Walong[20]

Walong is situated at the eastern end of NEFA not far from the Tri-junction of the borders of India, Tibet and Burma. It is over 100 miles north of Tezu, its nearest roadhead. It is located between 5,000–6,000 feet above the sea and its adjoining features vary between the heights of 10,000 to 15,000 feet. 11 Infantry Brigade, as a part of 2 Division,

20 2 Division had under it 11 Brigade in Walong, 5 Brigade in the Central Sector, where no major operations took place and remained short in strength till the end, despite my efforts.

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with 4 Sikh, 6 Kumaon and 3/3 Gorkhas was holding this position. The Chinese had two and later three Brigades opposite us. This garrison had been repeatedly attacked by the enemy from the very outset but had withstood these onslaughts so far extremely well. Our troops had offered stout resistance against heavy odds.

When I heard that an interesting battle was brewing at Walong, I flew there again on the 12th (I had been there once about ten days earlier). Midway, I stopped at Hayuliang to inspect its defence layout and eventually reached Walong late that morning. I was accompanied by my GSO I, Lt Col A. M. Vohra of 3/3 Gorkhas.

As soon as I stepped out of my Otter, an explosion took place within 200 yards of the airstrip. Brigadier 'Naween' Rawlley, Commander 11 Brigade[21] told me that the enemy had perhaps fired this shell for registration of the Walong airstrip. It later transpired that one of our shells, which had been air-dropped, had exploded as its parachute failed to open! I then walked from the airstrip to headquarters of 4 Sikh to watch a battle in progress nearby. Its noise was echoing in the hills all round. A Company of 4 Sikh probing forward had bumped against the enemy in strength. We had two killed and seven wounded in the skirmish. I saw these casualties coming back on stretchers. Men had been hit with small arms fire and were in great pain. Before they could be taken back to a hospital, first-aid was rendered to them at the Regimental Aid Post. They had been carried for hours over uneven rocky terrain. (I asked higher authorities in writing if some helicopters could be diverted to us at the earliest so that we could evacuate such casualties with greater speed and avoid anguish to the wounded. We could use the same helicopters for speedy replenishment of ammunition in

21 I had been in this formation twice before, once in 1939 as a Lieutenant and again from 1948 to 1952 as its Commander.

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distant and inaccessible areas.

Whilst the Sikh patrol was engaged in this battle, a Company was ordered to occupy a position called Tri-junction on its flank. Its capture was imperative as it was a stepping stone for the Chinese to dominate the airstrip. The Company came under heavy enemy fire in the process, but succeeded in getting a foot-hold on Tri-junction whilst I was at HQ of 4 Sikh. The Chinese then offered a good target and were shelled by us from what was known as the Dong locality as also by our heavy mortars from Walong. In order to exploit this success the Brigade ordered 6 Kumaon to reinforce this position by two more Companies. The route was extremely rocky and precipitous. All the same when speedy action was so essential, there was little excuse for the inordinate delay in this mission by 6 Kumaon due to which the Chinese forestalled us on this position.

After spending the night in Walong, I returned to Tezpur via Along, Tuting and Machuka on the 13th. The Chinese put in an attack on an important position in Walong on the 14th morning and as they captured a part of it, we were forced back to Tri-junction. I was worried about this situation. If the enemy continued his success, he would threaten our airstrip at Walong in time. Our position there would then be precarious.

Having received no report of any imminence of an attack by the enemy on the Tse La front, where I had been a few days earlier, I thought it would be a good thing if I could see the battle now raging in Walong. As my old Deputy, Maj Gen Dhillon, had come to visit my Headquarters at Tezpur earlier that day, at my suggestion he flew with me on the 15th afternoon to Tezu where we spent the night due to bad weather. We flew again at dawn on 16 November and landed at Walong soon after five in the middle of a battle which was in full swing. We could hear the guns and mortars booming not far away. The Chinese had

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launched an attack against us with a Division and penetrated our positions.

Shortly afterwards that morning, Maj Gen Dhillon left Walong back for Delhi. But before he left, he tried to persuade me to return with him. I told him, however, that as the position was critical and as I had commanded this Brigade once, I would, for psychological reasons, stay on.

The Commanding Officer of 4 Sikh reported to Major Ashok Handoo, Brigade Major, over the telephone that he was being heavily pressed by the enemy. 11 Brigade Commander sent him an order in my presence to hold on to his position and continue to fight. 4 Dogra were in the process of being inducted by air to Walong amidst this battle. Being new, they did not know the topography and were naturally bewildered.

A river divided our positions at Walong. Its right bank and adjoining areas were held by 3/3 Gorkhas in an area called Dakota Hill—Dong Plateau. On its left were 4 Sikh and 6 Kumaon. 4 Dogra were sent to relieve 6 Kumaon. Arrangements were made to protect our vital airfield. I overheard several telephone conversations (as I was at this time at headquarters 11 Brigade) between Commander, 11 Brigade or the Brigade Major on the one hand and Commanding Officers of Companies and Battalions holding our forward positions on the other, which gave me the impression that some of our Commanders, despite the resolute attitude of their Brigade Commander, could have displayed greater determination at the time. Soon after 4 Sikh and 3/3 Gorkhas began withdrawing from their positions under pressure. I heard Major Handoo telling several officers in various battalions over the telephone in no uncertain terms that they should keep fighting. Some of them did. Others did *not*.

The Divisional Commander and I both saw that the Brigade Commander was doing all that could be done in this battle. Except our moral support, there was nothing

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else we could give him at that stage. (We had sent to this garrison, 150 miles away from the Road Head, apart from reinforcements of personnel, field guns, some heavy mortars and many 3-inch mortars in the last few days or weeks. The Chinese returned many of these weapons they had captured in this war after ceasefire!)

As I sent a message through signals to the Army Chief and Army Commander at 0945 hours giving them the latest situation, I could hear the enemy fire advancing towards the Brigade Headquarters where I stood. I told them in my signal that the enemy was assaulting us with a Division. I requested for reinforcements and additional weapons and got back a reply from the Army Chief, later, to say I had his full support and wishing me good luck in the battle.

Brigadier Rawlley, Commander 11 Brigade, came up to me, in the presence of Commander 2 Division, at about 1000 hours and asked that in view of his Forward Defended Localities which were just then being over-run by the enemy and our Brigade Positions at Walong having become untenable, what were my orders to him in these circumstances. I told him in the presence and with the agreement of his Divisional Commander that:

(a) He was to hold on to his present position to the best of his ability.
(b) If the position became untenable, he was to take up an alternative position and hold it to the best of his ability.
(c) In the event of the alternative position also being untenable, he was to continue holding series of such positions and keep delaying the enemy as much as he could.

(I later confirmed the above in writing, with a copy to his Divisional Commander). Brigadier Rawlley also sought my orders regarding the priority in which he should extricate his personnel and weapons. I laid down a certain priority with which he agreed. At this point four shells fell near the airstrip. 11 Brigade began withdrawing soon after

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I took off in the last but one Otter from Walong, just before 1100 hours.

The Brigade was now falling back towards Hayuliang. As I had still received no news from my headquarters about the Tse La Sector, I spent the night 16/17 November at Headquarters 2 Infantry Division during which I sent a signal to Eastern Command and Army Headquarters asking them to send me additional resources in view of the Chinese superiority over me in NEFA. I suggested that as our disparties *vis-a-vis* the enemy were so many, we might (in our national interests) seek foreign[22] military aid without delay. I added this was not a counsel of fear but facing a stark reality.

Our men in NEFA, by and large, were without sufficient digging tools, had defective and deficient automatic and other weapons, ammunitions and wireless sets, short of helicopters for various purposes and evacuating casualties from inaccessible areas where man-handling them was a superhuman task. I had also found a large percentage of parachutes failing to open and resulting in free drops of important equipment which was being destroyed as a result. A large number of our men were employed in dumping bulky supplies at sharp gradients and high altitudes.

As I had received no disturbing news about Tse La on the 16th or the 17th morning, and I was concerned about the safety of my retreating men of 11 Brigade (lest they had been intercepted by the enemy) I asked the Air Force to fly me back in a helicopter on the 17th morning to as

22 I recommended this step to Thapar verbally also when he came to visit me at Tezpur on 17 November. Thapar in turn had spoken to Nehru the next day. I understand Nehru sent a message on this subject to the US State Department (Kennedy?) soon after. But alas! the war was over four days later. I do not advocate that we should ever depend on foreign military aid longer than necessary, but certainly plead that *in grave national emergencies* its acceptance from friendly powers is quite legitimate. (If we had not asked and received military aid from various foreign countries, a little later, where would we have been in the Indo-Pakistan conflict in 1965, or today?)

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near Walong as possible, in order that I could locate this Brigade. The Air Force pointed out that in trying to scan the country for spotting our men they might have to fly low enough to be engaged by enemy's small arms fire from the ground.

We had flown past Hayuliang. Due to gusts of strong wind through its windows a loose flap in the helicopter began to make noise resembling the distant clatter of a machine gun. 'We are being fired by the enemy,' shouted one of our companions in the helicopter. (The pilot, however, kept going on.) We thought for a moment we *were* in fact being shot at by the enemy but on scrutiny found that it was a false alarm. When we were only ten (?) miles short of Walong, we spotted Brigadier Rawlley in a grey woollen shirt waving to our helicopter from a track below, just along the river, with a bunch of men around him. As there was no room to land at the track, due to thick country, the pilot landed in the dry sandy bed of the river. I then rushed up to where he was as fast as I could and heaved a sigh of relief seeing Rawlley and his party safe. I offered to take him and some selected officers back with me to Hayuliang for refreshments after which they could come back to their men. Quite rightly, however, he said he would rather remain with his men. He asked me to drop some food as they had had none since the day before. This I did on coming back to Hayuliang. There I got a message from my Headquarters that Thapar and Sen were due in Tezpur shortly. I, therefore, returned there without delay.

Some of my critics have questioned the advisability of my frequent visits to forward battle areas in my Corps and have suggested that by remaining at my Headquarters, instead, I could have controlled and co-ordinated my operations better. I think every Commander worth his salt, instead of remaining glued to his chair at his Headquarters all the time, likes to go forward periodically, to see the progress of the operations personally, to set an example by

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exposing himself to dangerous situations, to share the ordeals of his troops and his subordinate commanders, to keep up their morale in critical battles. This is what I tried to do. I will cite here what General Patton once said after World War II about being away from his Headquarters during a battle:

> By remaining on the beach, pushing boats, by not taking shelter when enemy planes flew over, I quietened the nerves of the troops on the beach. I spent eighteen hours *away from my headquarters* and was wet all over. Some people say that the Army Commander should not indulge in such practices. My theory is that a senior Commander should do what is necessary to accomplish his mission and nearly eighty percent of every mission is to arouse the morale of his men.

In any case, I was away from my Headquarters for short durations and was doing my best, when I was back in my seat, to co-ordinate and control my uphill operations. For example, I went to Walong, one of my important flanks, on receipt of serious news from there and before news had reached me of any attack towards or on the Tse La position. But if any of my Commanders, or Staff Officers wanted to seek my directions on some matter, during the period of my absence, they could have always got in touch with me through a courier or by wireless, wherever I was.

The Battle of Tse La

The Tse La position lay 14,000 feet high mainly around a Pass by that name. It was about twenty-five miles South of Towang (10,000 feet) and about seventy miles North of Bomdi La (8,500 feet). Dirong Dzong lay in a valley at an altitude of about 6,000 feet. Tse La and Towang were connected by a road which had been built recently.

When Thapar and Sen decided (whilst I lay sick in Delhi) to abandon Towang on 24 October as it was considered untenable and to hold Tse La instead, they did so because they were convinced that the latter position was

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impregnable. Brigadier K. K. Singh, my Brigadier General Staff, told Lt Gen Sen, in my absence, that we should make our next stand against the Chinese after Towang at Bomdi La, not at Tse La, because we would have a shorter line of communications at Bomdi La than at Tse La and have some other strategic and tactical advantages. He was, however, over-ruled by Sen.

Thapar chose Maj Gen A. S. Pathania, MVC, MC as Commander 4 Division which was to guard this position. Pathania had a creditable war record. (Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh was appointed as officiating 4 Corps Commander for less than a week whilst I was lying sick.)

Headquarters, 4 Division[23] was to be located at Dirong Dzong with 48, 62 and 65 Brigades under it. 48 Brigade was to hold Bomdi La; 62 Brigade Tse La[24] and 65 Brigade Dirong Dzong. 301 Brigade was to assemble as soon as possible. Commander 62 Brigade was the heroic Brigadier Hoshiar Singh, with an impressive war record. He was entrusted with the defence of Tse La. He was built up with artillery, ammunition and supplies as well as circumstances permitted.

The Chinese kept building up their Towang garrison. As soon as they linked up Towang with Bumla by road, they concentrated nearly two Divisions in that general area.

When I last visited Headquarters 4 Infantry Division at Dirong Dzong on 7 November, Pathania gave me a satisfactory picture about his Division, though he asked for reinforcements of men and material for which I, without delay, put up a strong representation in writing to higher authorities (I had no spare resources of my own). I also visited Tse La and found the various Commanding Officers in what looked to be good cheer.

23 My heart fluttered at the sight of its Divisional sign—the red eagle—and I wondered if in keeping with its past traditions it would add some further feathers in its cap, little realizing what calamities lay in store for it.

24 Tse La and Bomdi La lie nearly seventy miles apart.

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In the meantime, vigorous patrolling and intermittent shelling of enemy positions continued. I was of the view that if Tse La was attacked, it *was* in a position to hold out for several days till reinforcements arrived as it was fairly well stocked, though its long line of communications was a handicap.

The Chinese attacked 4 Garhwal at Nauranag, a forward position North of the Tse La Pass, on the 17th morning four times but the Garhwalis fought valiantly[25] and repulsed each attack. The enemy then attacked 1 Sikh Light Infantry, east of the pass. This battalion did not make as good a stand as the Garhwalis.

When I walked into my operations room at Tezpur at 1930 hours on 17th November on my return from the battle of Walong, I found Lt Gen Sen and General Thapar along with Brigadier Palit waiting for me. I was glad to see them all but specially Palit who had written to me a letter as recently as 15 November 1962 in which he had said, among other things, 'You must ask for me in your command—always—whatever you command. . . .' As soon as I shook hands with my visitors, I was told that the situation at Tse La had deteriorated. Misfortunes never come alone! Thapar said Maj Gen A. S. Pathania, Commander 4 Division had been trying to get in touch with me on the telephone a little earlier. When Thapar and Sen spoke to him, Pathania sought orders that in view of overwhelming Chinese pressure at Tse La, and the fact that it might be cut off by the enemy from Dirong Dzong, could he have permission to withdraw 62 Brigade from its present position back to Dirong Dzong? Thapar and Sen had given no orders to Pathania and told him that a decision on this point would be given only by me when I returned to my Headquarters.

25 If only 4 Division had fought as well as did 4 Garhwal, the story of the battle of Tse La would have been different.

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Maj Gen Pathania spoke to me at about 1945 hours over the telephone and made persistent requests to be permitted to withdraw 62 Brigade from Tse La during the night 17/18 November as he said there was a *possibility* of its being cut off from Senge the same night. He told me that he thought the enemy was attacking him with more than a Division. I emphasized the importance of retaining our foothold over Tse La and told him that he had sufficient strength, ammunition and supplies to hold out for at least a week even if the enemy did succeed in cutting him off from the rear. I pointed out to him the possibility of his being encircled in the process of *withdrawal* from Tse La and, therefore, advocated to him the advantage of 62 Brigade fighting it out from its present position. He reiterated his request telephonically later that night, when Thapar, Sen and I were having dinner, to withdraw from Tse La later the same night as he thought the situation in this sector was deteriorating fast. I told Pathania within the hearing of the Army Chief Thapar that he must hold out at Tse La at least on the night of 17/18 November and that I would give final orders to him on the 18th morning. (I thought if he could hold on that night, he might stabilize his position). He still sounded unhappy about this decision. *After consultations with the Army Chief and the Army Commander* and in view of what the G.O.C. 4 Division had repeatedly represented to me over the phone, I sent to him the following communication that night :

(a) You will hold on to your present position to the best of your ability.

(b) *When any position becomes untenable,* I delegate the authority to you to withdraw to any alternative position you can hold.

(c) Approximately 400 enemy have cut the Road Bomdi La-Dirong Dzong.

(d) I have ordered Commander, 48 Brigade, at Bomdi La (as 4 Division was *not* in touch with 48 Brigade) to attack the enemy Force tonight speedily and resolutely and keep this road clear at all costs.

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(e) You may be cut off by the enemy at Senge (as he had been warned of this possibility in my Operational Instruction about ten days ago).

(f) Your only course is to fight it out as best as you can.

(g) Reinforcements of two battalions will reach Bomdi La by 18th morning.

(h) Use your tanks and other supporting arms to the fullest extent to clear your Lines of Communication.

(I want to make a point here. General Thapar and Lt Gen Sen were present with me on the 17th and 18th. *Whatever important orders I gave during this period, I did so in consultation with them and with their approval.)*

I learnt many days later that Pathania told Brigadier Hoshiar Singh, Commander, 62 Brigade, sometime on the 17th that he was likely to be cut[26] from the rear, that the Divisional and 65 Brigade positions were critical and that therefore he should withdraw that night and reinforce Dirong Dzong. Brigadier Hoshiar Singh had already sent to Dirong Dzong one battalion for this purpose, and therefore first resisted withdrawing from his strong position at Tse La which he had taken pains to prepare. When Pathania insisted, Hoshiar Singh pleaded that a major withdrawal like this required about two days' preparation and that he would therefore move in forty-eight hours. Pathania harped on the great urgency of his moving without loss of any further time. Hoshiar Singh therefore started withdrawing from Tse La against his better judgement as soon as he could that night.

Pathania had given orders for this withdrawal against the spirit of my instructions which said that he should hold on to his present position to the best of his ability and withdraw only when it became *untenable*. When

26 When Pathania told Hoshiar Singh that the enemy might cut him from behind, the latter retorted that by doing so the enemy would also cut himself. Hoshiar Singh also said that he could deal with this interruption of his Line of Communications as also hold Tse La.

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Brigadier Hoshiar Singh reached Senge, he found that his officers and men were in poor shape and tried to re-establish the situation but in vain. Lt Col Bhattacharjee was captured by the Chinese in the process of a counter attack. That night the adjacent ridge of Nyukamadong was attacked by the Chinese. On the 18th morning the enemy shelled Bridge 2 which the Brigade was trying to blow up after getting across.

The Chinese had driven a wedge between Tse La and Dirong Dzong. When the Brigade reached about half way, they were confronted with some Chinese machine guns and mortars on the road. Our troops took many casualties here as they, along with their vehicles, were bunched up and disorganized. They dispersed in all directions in the darkness which had descended by now. No one knew what was happening. There were orders and counter orders. Many abandoned their arms, ammunition and wireless sets and seemed to be for themselves, some escaping into the adjoining hills. They had nothing to eat or drink except dirty water and spent the night in bitter cold. Pathania, in asking them to abandon Tse La so hastily, had put them in this situation.

We were in this plight due, among other things, to the poor example set by certain Commanding Officers. (There were, however, notable exceptions, e.g. Commanding Officer 4 Garhwal who showed conspicuous leadership, and the late Lt Col Avasthi of 4 Rajput, who could have withdrawn safely but kept waiting for his men between Senge and Dirong Dzong and was, therefore, killed in an ambush by the enemy.)

On 18 November when I spoke to Pathania, over the telephone at 0530 hours, he once again sought permission to withdraw from Tse La, which I had no option but to give, though grudgingly, (after consulting Thapar and Sen who were still with me) and only when he informed me that 62 *Brigade had already started pulling out from Tse La*

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on the 17th night after a 'bitter' fight (sic) on both its flanks. I learnt later that there was no *bitter* fight at Tse La except in odd cases (e.g. 4 Garhwal). Tse La was given up without much resistance although 4 Division had here five infantry battalions, one field regiment of artillery less a battery and the normal fire support of a Brigade group. It also had over a week's maintenance stores.

It was, therefore, *not* Hoshiar Singh pressing Pathania but Pathania pressing Hoshiar Singh to withdraw from Tse La! Actually, Pathania, advised by one of his staff officers, was itching to give up his strong position at Tse La, only to reinforce his own at Dirong Dzong. In the process, he fell between two stools. (He lost his heart, Tse La, Dirong Dzong, and Bomdi La, all in a row.) In other places in NEFA, the Chinese superior resources and our many handicaps were the cause of our failure, but here the cause of our reverse were Pathania and some of his Commanders.

The enemy fell upon our positions at Bomdi La and Dirong Dzong soon after capturing Tse La and cut these two places from all sides. Dirong Dzong was abandoned soon after by 65 Brigade and Headquarters 4 Division, on the morning of the 18th.

G. O. C., 4 Division, started moving on the Road Dirong Dzong-Bomdi La, but meeting with some enemy opposition, the extent of which I have not been able to determine, he took a decision, *on his own,* left the main road and started withdrawing via Mandala track towards the Foothills. I understand some of the Chinese in this party were dressed in our uniforms[27] and gave words of command in Hindi to confuse us about their identity whereas we were in no position to do the same, as we had hardly any Chinese speaking individuals available. I do not know what orders Pathania gave to the troops remaining behind before they

27 Which they had presumably removed from our dead.

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abandoned the general area Dirong Dzong or the main road. Tse La and Dirong Dzong therefore fell without much bloodshed.

This was *not* the finest hour of the renowned 4 Infantry Division, which I had the good fortune to command once. It was not the same in November, 1962 as when I knew it during 1956-59. Some of its Brigades were new. So were its battalions. This Division had failed to put up a fight in keeping with its traditions. (A. S. Pathania was removed from the command of this Division and given another assignment by Government, outside the Army.)

The Battle of Bomdi La

Bomdi La lies almost midway between the Foothills and Tse La. 48 Brigade under Brigadier Gurbaksh Singh was concentrated for the defence of Bomdi La as late as the first week of November without any stores to prepare the defence of this difficult position. 4 Division had informed 48 Brigade that the latter was on the lowest priority for reinforcements and stores. On 11 November, 4 Division ordered this Brigade to locate a company at an outpost called Tposhing La by 13 November, a tall order. As a platoon had already left for that place earlier, 48 Brigade moved the second platoon on the 12th and the third on the 13th. 48 Brigade had confirmed to 4 Division that one company of 5 Guards was in position at Tposhing La by the 14th. This position was later attacked and over-run by approximately one enemy Brigade (news of this and later operation reached us much later). The Chinese then continued their advance towards Bomdi La and Dirong Dzong.

48 Brigade was ordered by 4 Division on the 15th to establish a firm base with a battalion at Thembong and then to recapture Tposhing La. 5 Guards were sent out for this purpose. 65 Brigade were ordered to protect the left flank of 48 Brigade. 5 Guards reached Thembong by

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the 16th. Its Battalion Commander started establishing a firm base there and sent ahead one company on the way to Tposhing La. In the meantime, the enemy had made further progress in our direction. 48 Brigade was now ordered by 4 Division to hold Thembong with 5 Guards. When 5 Guards reported their inability to hold this position any further, the Brigade Commander ordered them to withdraw to Bomdi La. Their withdrawal, however, was cut by the Chinese and the former appeared, in small parties, eventually, at Foothills. After pushing back 5 Guards, the enemy cut our line of communication Bomdi La-Dirong Dzong at a point about six kilometres North of Bomdi La by a party of about 400 at approximately 2100 hours on the 17th. Commander, 48 Brigade, spoke to me about this situation soon after and told me that he was *not* in communication with Commander 4 Division. I ordered him to attack the enemy the same night, as time was vital, speedily and resolutely and keep the road clear as the enemy was likely to continue to build it up and jeopardize our position at Bomdi La. I told him I was sending him two Infantry Battalions (6/8 Gorkha Rifles and 3 J and K Rifles) to reinforce and restore the situation by the 18th. Commander 48 Brigade told me that he had only six companies left in Bomdi La against 16 that were required and in view of this shortage of troops, an adequate Force could not be raised to carry out my order, without endangering the defence of Bomdi La. He recommended that aggressive patrolling should be carried out instead. I asked him to do the best he could and put what little armour (two serviceable tanks) he had to good use and if possible link up with Dirong Dzong. The next morning at 1100 hours, by the time a Force of two Infantry companies accompanied by two tanks and two out of his total of four mountain guns had assembled on the road to carry out a link-up with Dirong Dzong, the Chinese occupied the positions 48 Brigade had vacated and began to fire at our gun positions

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and the administrative areas.

The Commanding Officer of the 3 J and K Infantry along with his second-in-command and an advance party reached Bomdi La at about midday on the 18th. The remainder of this battalion was following up. As regards the 6/8 Gorkha Rifles, the second battalion which was coming to reinforce 48 Brigade, it stopped short at Chako instead of rushing up to Bomdi La to save a critical situation. Had both these units reached Bomdi La by the morning of the 18th, which they should have done, the situation there might well have been saved.

The Sikh Light Infantry never got back to their position and withdrew. In the meantime other troops started withdrawing without orders because the Chinese were now occupying the heights of Bomdi La. When the Brigade Commander found the situation out of control, he, along with some of his staff, moved back to Rupa by about 1630 hours. When Commander, 6/8 Gorkha Rifles met Commander, 48 Brigade at Rupa, the latter asked him why his battalion had not moved up to Bomdi La, to which question there was no satisfactory reply. When Brigadier Gurbaksh Singh, Commander, 48 Brigade, on reaching Rupa, heard that some of his men were still in Bomdi La, (he told me later) he went back to that place that night. On reaching Bomdi La, he found about two hundred of his men bunched around near the airstrip. Brigadier Gurbaksh Singh then withdrew them to Rupa just before dawn.

I heard at 1830 hours on the 18th at Tezpur that Bomdi La had fallen earlier that afternoon. Within 30 minutes I left Tezpur—as I thought that at this crisis it was no good sitting back[28] —and reached Foothills by 2100 hours, after going through a wave of transport and humanity on the road.

28 I was anxious to be amidst my troops who were up a gum tree, a natural reaction in the mind of a Commander in such situations.

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As I went up from Foothills towards Bomdi La, on the 19th morning, I found the road cluttered up with troops and refugees coming back. I, therefore, crawled along at a snail's pace. I was trying to get as far forward as possible in the hope that I might help in the restoration of the situation somehow. We intercepted the telephone lines on the way and overheard many conversations between Rupa and the Corps Headquarters, which gave us a good idea of the withdrawal from there to Chako. I also gave many orders through this means.

When I reached the vicinity of Chako, midway between Foothills and Bomdi La, I was told that 5 Division had reached Foothills to reinforce Tse La and Bomdi La (after they had fallen!). I met Maj Gen K. K. Bhandari, Commander of this formation, and briefed him about the latest situation.

Rupa, in the Tenga Valley, had been abandoned by 48 Brigade at 1100 hours that morning. I saw some Indian and foreign correspondents and many others coming back. As one of the correspondents saw me going towards the advancing enemy, he must have made some presumptions and flashed a message to the B.B.C. which announced that evening that I had been captured by the Chinese.

48 Infantry Brigade asked for ammunition, rations and digging tools for its units at Chako on the 19th, which I sent. Close at their heel I sent Lt Col Shahbeg Singh, mainly to press them forward. He went to Chako—Eagle's Nest—and beyond and showed, whilst on this mission, plenty of drive and guts. The enemy attacked and overwhelmed 6/8 Gorkha Rifles and 3 J and K Rifles at Chako that night.

The decision to move the Corps Headquarters from Tezpur to Gauhati was reached in mutual consultation between me, Lt Gen Sen and Gen Thapar. This move was carried out on the 20th afternoon, though I along with Brigadier K.K. Singh, Luthra, Adviser to the Governor of

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Assam, who was with me at the time and two or three others chose to stay on at Tezpur. The rumour-mongers in the Army and outside said that I had moved back to Gauhati that day or later, which was untrue. Smear campaign and vilification were the order of the day.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Dhebar, the ex-Congress President, arrived at Tezpur earlier. Dhebar had come there to rehabilitate some women and also for some other work. When Walong, Tse La and Bomdi La fell, I apprised the Deputy Commissioner Tezpur of the situation. I later heard that he flew away to Calcutta without permission along with his family the same afternoon.

When the representatives of the British Tea Planters sought my advice whether they should stay on in their present locations along with their families in view of the deteriorating operational situation or withdraw to a place of comparative safety, I counselled that they should, as a precautionary measure, protect the lives of their women and children by taking them to safer areas but should themselves remain in their present locations. This they did. I must say they displayed typical spirit of British fortitude in a critical situation.

18–20 *November*

Thapar had told me at Tezpur on the 18th that in view of our many military disasters (in Ladakh and NEFA), Government were likely to come in for much public criticism and he might therefore offer his resignation to Nehru if such a step could be of any help. I told him that there was no need for him to do so. Whilst flying back from Tezpur to Delhi, Thapar aired the same thought to Brigadier Palit. The latter first told him that such action was not really necessary. But on second thoughts, Palit told Thapar that it might appear a good gesture on his part, if he took such a course on arrival at Delhi, though he felt sure that Nehru would never accept

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the Chief's resignation. When Thapar reached Delhi that night, he went straight to Nehru's house and told him that in view of the recent reverses, if it would help him or the Government, he was prepared to put in his papers. Nehru told Thapar that he would let him know if there was any need for him to do so. The next day S. S. Khera, the Cabinet Secretary, saw Thapar and told him that Nehru had decided to make use of his offer. Thapar then put in his request for premature retirement which was sanctioned. Thus, Thapar was sacrificed for political reasons.

Thapar named Lt Gen J. N. Chaudhuri, the next senior, to be his successor. Here was fate salvaging Chaudhuri as he had already received his retirement orders, on completion of his normal tenure as Lt General. Chaudhuri, who had lost all hope of any further laurels in his military career, was suddenly catapulted into the post of the Army Chief and had this windfall by an act of God. This was on 20 November. The irony of the situation was that Chaudhuri had asked Thapar a few days earlier to import him to Delhi and give him some worthwhile job at Army Headquarters (the hub of activities) as he felt he was wasting his time as Army Commander at Poona. When Thapar consulted some of his Principal Staff Officers, they advised him not to give Chaudhuri any responsible appointment at Delhi as he would not make an ideal member of a team, mainly because of his ego. Thapar therefore decided to keep Chaudhuri away from Delhi. But in the meantime destiny was beckoning to the latter.

On 20 November, whilst the situation still seemed precarious and no one was sure, least of all Chaudhuri, whether or not the Chinese would continue their advance, or what further disasters awaited the Indian Army, Chaudhuri whom the *Statesman* has described as having blazed a trail of glory, asked General P. N. Thapar, in an extreme state of nervousness, that in view of the grave shortages of manpower and equipment of our Army, how

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long did he (Thapar) think he (Chaudhuri) would last in his job as the Army Chief. Thapar reassured Chaudhuri that he need not worry unduly as the worst seemed to be over and that he did not think the Chinese advance would go unchallenged in the plains. Luck, then, came to Chaudhuri's rescue once again and the Chinese declared their unilateral ceasefire, withdrawing from our territory over which they had advanced. Chaudhuri was quick in his metamorphosis and at once posed as a 'tough' Army Chief and led many to believe, that he was determined, as if by a miracle, to 'rejuvenate an army which had deteriorated'—a view expressed in whispers only—due to 'factions and poor leadership' in the past. No one could have changed colours faster than Chaudhuri had done. And, as usual, circumstances favoured him. (One of our prominent politicians thereafter made a statement which meant in effect that he would *not* enter a certain city till all our territories lost by us to the Chinese had been reconquered. Ironically, this pledge has not been fulfilled to this day, about four years after it was made. I do not know whether this particular politician has entered this city since.) Our leaders must remember that it takes some years to raise additional Forces, equip and train them on modern weapons and under good commanders. They should learn by their past mistakes, gain in military strength quietly and when the time comes, give evidence of their power. There is little point in beating their drum, which will deceive no one except ourselves. China or Pakistan, or for that matter any other country, will respect our word only when we are really powerful and will ignore our sabre-rattling. And, 'Power', according to Mao Tse Tung, 'grows out of the barrel of a gun'!

The country was—by and large—made to believe that our military disasters in 1962 were due to the incompetence of certain individual military commanders (and not due to the incompetence of Government as a whole (?) who kept

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the army in an unprepared state for war for a number of years despite repeated military advice to do something about it).

21 *November (a)*

Tse La, Bomdi La, Rupa and Chako had fallen. Dhola, Towang and Walong had gone earlier. In Ladakh also many similar disasters had taken place. The Chinese then suddenly declared a unilateral ceasefire. What with the recent reverses and the ceasefire, precluding the possibility of avenging our defeat, at least in the foreseeable future, and what with all sorts of false and sustained propaganda rampant against me, this change of régime at the Army Headquarters, in addition, was too much for me to stomach. I felt so strongly that the thought of retiring prematurely from Service passed through my mind that night.

My critics contended that our reverses in NEFA were mainly due to the fact that I did not have adequate experience for commanding an operational Corps. This raises the interesting question : what is adequate experience for senior commanders? I think it consists of a combination of opportunities of having put into practice one's qualities of leadership and theoretical professional knowledge at various levels in diverse fields on the Staff and in Command in peace and war. Most Indian officers were too young to hold senior ranks during World War II or the Kashmir operations. Most of them, therefore, did not have the opportunity to acquire operational experience above the rank[29] of Major or Lt Colonel. There were also some Indians who had risen to the rank of Lieutenant General

29 I know of three officers now holding very senior ranks, who have never heard a shot fired in the last twenty years or so and only had operational experience in a comparatively junior capacity, but who masquerade (and are accepted by some) as if they had 'vast' battle experience.

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without seeing any war. I am not trying to lay undue emphasis on any particular aspects of my career—as it is what it is—but only wish to state that my record of service, taken as a whole, in diverse fields did not compare unfavourably with that of my contemporaries.

I assumed command of the Corps in NEFA on 4 October 1962, when its total strength was only two instead of about six to nine Brigades. A fortnight later the Brigade at Dhola was overrun by the Chinese. If this Brigade was professionally not up to the mark or made any omissions, its own Commander—Brigadier Dalvi—should provide an answer. This Brigade (and other formations later) just before they came to me in NEFA, had served for some time elsewhere under other organizations which should, therefore, be held responsible for any weaknesses from which they suffered. For their handicaps such as lack of training and acclimatization, or shortages of resources, the Indian Army, as a whole, or the Government were responsible. Whilst I am prepared to share this *collective* responsibility, as I was a part of the Indian Army, it will not be right to single me out for this state of affairs. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that, within a period of a few days or weeks, I could not work wonders with the weaknesses of any formation which had come under me only recently. I am answerable only technically and to the extent that these hastily assembled units and formations happened to be under my command at the time. As a matter of fact, I did all that lay within my power, for those under me, during this short period administratively or operationally. Finally, I did not interfere with any of the formations or units under my command nor did I give direct orders to any of my subordinate commanders, without keeping their intermediate superiors in the picture. No position in NEFA fell, e.g. Dhola, Towang, Tse La, Bomdi La or Walong, because of any unsound orders I, personally, had given. I was told to hold these places by higher authority

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and they fell for causes which lay beyond my power.

Moreover, I was not the only senior officer responsible for fighting in NEFA in October/November 1962. There were some above and also many below me. The Army hierarchy was something as follows. Right on top was the Army Chief with three Army Commanders under him. One of them was Lt Gen Sen, in charge of the Eastern theatre, including NEFA, *since* April 1961. Under him were two Corps: 33 and 4, the former dealing with Nagaland and some other areas and 4 Corps dealing with NEFA. Under my Corps were two[30] Divisions, each commanded by a Major General. Under them were several Infantry Brigades commanded by Brigadiers. So there were all these senior commanders above or below me whose combined responsibility it was to hold NEFA in parts or as a whole. For instance, Maj Gen A. S. Pathania, one of my Divisional Commanders, had been responsible for losing our important position at Tse La. Then there was Lt Gen Sen, my Army Commander, who had endorsed and never found fault—to my knowledge—with any of my actions, whilst I was in command in NEFA (and under whom NEFA had been for almost eighteen months before I came on the scene). He, therefore, also bears responsibility for what happened there. There have been cases in military history of Army Commanders and above who have been removed from their commands during operations just because a certain reverse, though at a lower level, had taken place under their overall command (like the reverse in NEFA, an area under Sen).

It would be pertinent to ask why my 'better' counterparts, in command of defences in Ladakh, under whom similar reverses had taken place, at the same time, were praised for a 'stout defence'.

30 Some additional Forces came under my command but only just before the ceasefire!

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What happened in NEFA (or Ladakh) was the result of omissions on the part of many : Government and several of its civil and military functionaries. I am prepared to share this responsibility with all these people but no more. I suppose by pointing a finger at me here, my critics were 'proving' their point; whereas if they beat some others, in identical circumstances, with the same stick, they would have only diluted their case against me!

21 *November (b)*

The town of Tezpur was deserted. The civil authorities had released convicts from jails. Banks were closed after they had burnt their currency notes.

Lal Bahadur Shastri;[31] 'Bijjoo' Patnaik and Chaliha met me at the Tezpur airport for about an hour on 21, during which they discussed with me the current situation.

From 18 to 22 November, I had had no news of Maj Gen A. S. Pathania and was, therefore, extremely concerned about his safety. I did not know whether he had been killed in action or was a prisoner; stranded somewhere in the wilds of NEFA without food or other sustenance; wounded or sick; needing medical aid or in a state of helplessness. Now that fighting was over, I thought I must locate him somehow.

I heard in the afternoon that some personnel of 4 Division which had withdrawn from their sector, had been spotted near Kalaktong, North-West of Tezpur, in the foothills. I decided to land at this point in a helicopter, in the hope that someone might tell me where Pathania had been seen last, giving me a possible clue to his present whereabouts. Maneckji, Commanding General, Home Guards, had come from Delhi and seen me just then. I asked him to come along with me on this interesting mission

31 Home Minister, Central Cabinet; and Chief Ministers of Orissa and Assam respectively.

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which he did gladly.

There is no shortage of gallant pilots in our Air Force. Hence I had little difficulty in hopping a lift in a helicopter in order to get to this point. We flew towards Kalaktong, then turned in the direction of Bomdi La—Dirong Dzong. The pilot went for miles looking for our men in distress on every possible route across country but in vain. We kept in the air for quite sometime and flew over many areas where the enemy might well have been. We were flying quite low to spot our men. Eventually we came back after what proved to be a wild goose chase. I was disappointed at not having found Pathania or any of his men. Maneckji then went back to Delhi.

While I was still at the Tezpur airport, I met a young pilot, in charge of another helicopter, who had been slightly wounded in his foot a day or two earlier—who agreed to fly me out in quest of Pathania once again. He thought he knew exactly where our men could be. We had only about half an hour's daylight left. The moon was to rise late that night. So there was a prospect of our return flight being in pitch-dark, something one is not supposed to attempt in helicopters, but which this gallant pilot—whose name, alas, has slipped my memory—was more than willing to do.

After flying for about half an hour, we landed near Bhairapkunda, about fifteen miles North of Udalgiri in Foothills, where we saw some of our men who had trekked back miserably from Dirong Dzong to here. They had had little to eat on the way and looked weary and unkempt. A few minutes later, Pathania also appeared on the scene. I was relieved to see him safe, though I did think then that there was the architect of our major reverse in NEFA.[32]

32 Major General A. S. Pathania, on hearing I had asked for voluntary retirement, wrote to me on 5 December: '. . . You have been a victim of circumstances. But your action after (our recent) reverses has been that of a very great man. . . . I have perhaps indirectly let you down. . . . I can well imagine your mental agony and grief. . . .'

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I also found some wounded men and put one or two in my helicopter along with Pathania. We flew first in semi and then in total darkness and after some very skilful flying on the part of our plucky pilot, we landed back at Tezpur about forty-five minutes later.

A little earlier, Menon had resigned from Government due to considerable pressure from all sides. Nehru's own position was in peril with Menon's continued stay in the Cabinet in the teeth of opposition. Menon had done extremely well on the administrative side but had fallen a victim to the errors of his own judgement in operational matters. Ironically, events also conspired against this lone wolf.

When Menon fell from grace, his many past services to India were forgotten and only his errors remembered. True to the fickleness of human nature, those who worshipped him in prosperity, hastened to become his adversaries, now that he was on the rocks.

Before I go on with this account, it will be pertinent for me to say a few words here about Ladakh.

To us in NEFA, both as soldiers and as Indians, it was a heart-rending experience to learn how the ruthless Chinese were overwhelming us in the Ladakh area also. There too our troops were fighting against cruel odds. It was typical of unscrupulous controversialists, in an attempt to discredit me, to have spoken, in those days, of the 'stout' defence put up by our men in Ladakh as furnishing a refreshing contrast to our 'feeble' effort in NEFA. But my country must not be permanently misled. What happened to us in Ladakh—where our debacle was as great in magnitude as in NEFA—is related in the following paragraphs.

On the morning of 20 October, one of our pilots on a supply dropping mission to the Daulet Beg Oldi area was hit by twenty bullets fired by the Chinese from the ground. He saw one of our posts near Daulet Beg Oldi—a few miles

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below the Karakoram Pass—surrounded by the Chinese and some smoke coming out from the area in which they were located. The Chinese over-ran five posts in this sector by the evening. All others in the vicinity were then ordered by 114 Infantry Brigade—under command of Lt Genls Daulet Singh and Bikram Singh, who were the Army and Corps Commanders concerned—to fall back to the rear of Daulet Beg Oldi. This withdrawal was completed on the 23rd.

On 21 and 22 October, our post at Point 18540 fell; Galwan was threatened and fell on the 22nd; and both our posts at Siri Jap were over-run after some fighting. Konga and Chang-Chenmo fell. Our posts Ane La and Chartse were ordered to withdraw to Phobrang.

On the 24th our post at Yula 1 fell back. Thus we had given up the whole of Northern Ladakh within forty-eight hours.

On the 27th, Chang La was over-run by the enemy. Jara La, after holding out first, fell later. Damchok was abandoned and our posts at Nulla junction and Hot Spring were withdrawn. Phase one, during which the posts mentioned above fell in Ladakh, and in which Dhola and Towang had fallen in NEFA, was over.

In the second phase of the Chinese attack, in Ladakh, on 18 November, (about the time they had over-run Walong, Tse La and Bomdi La, in NEFA,) the enemy started shelling Razang La, Gurung Hill, Spanggur gap and the area adjacent to the Chusul airfield. The Chinese occupied areas up to their claim line on the 19th/20th, which did not include the Chusul village or the airfield both of which are four miles apart. This line included Razang La hill, Razang spur, the Mugger Hill, dominating the Spanggur gap, the Gurung hill, Goswami hill, Gun hill, and Point 18300. Once we were beaten back behind these positions, the Chinese halted their advance. (In the battle of Razang La, Major Shaitan Singh laid his life gallantly.) As a matter of

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fact, neither the Chusul village nor the airfield were ever attacked nor did any battle take place there, though grim pictures of fierce fighting in the 'battle' of Chusul, have been painted to give the impression that Ladakh (as opposed to NEFA) put up a stout resistance. The saving grace in Ladakh was that Chusul, not being within the Chinese claim line, remained intact (because it was never attacked!). We lost our key posts in Northern, Central and Southern Ladakh, over large areas which were within the Chinese claim line. On the night of the 20th/21st the Chinese declared a unilateral ceasefire. There were many small and isolated posts in Ladakh. When they were surrounded by the enemy and overwhelmed, some of them, in the process, fought well and others did not. In NEFA also, the same had happened. Even at Tse La, the Garhwalis had fought well. My garrison at Walong had put up a stout resistance to the enemy. Why has this fact not been taken into account? The result both in Ladakh and NEFA was the same. In each, we had rapidly lost vast territories.

It will be recalled that when we first awoke to the Chinese intrusion in the Ladakh area and their silent capture of thousands of square miles of territory there, some of our leaders dismissed the consequent public uproar and airily described the area as a place where 'not a blade of grass grew.' This created an impression in the public mind that NEFA was in every way more important than Ladakh. Actually, this is not so. If NEFA was more valuable administratively, Ladakh was so strategically.

The number of posts or the area which fell in Ladakh —despite all efforts on the part of its excellent Commander Brigadier (now Maj Gen) Raina—was no less than that which fell in NEFA. No major battle took place in Ladakh but in those minor engagements which did take place, we did not have the better of the Chinese anywhere. There were, however, individual acts of gallantry[33] both in

33 What makes men to face dangerous situations willingly? Is it temptation

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Ladakh and in NEFA, as many decorations in that theatre showed. A typical example was that of Sepoy Kanshi Ram of 9 Punjab who was awarded Mahavir Chakra by Government and whose citation read as follows:

On 10 October 1962, the post at Tsengjong in NEFA was attacked by approximately 500 Chinese. Disregarding the heavy enemy fire, Sepoy Kanshi Ram covered the right approach to this post with his light machine gun and inflicted heavy casualties on the Chinese. He was himself seriously wounded by splinters from a mortar bomb which burst just outside his trench. After the enemy attack was repulsed, Sepoy Kanshi Ram was given first aid and his Company Commander wanted him to be evacuated as his injury was serious and he was bleeding profusely. He refused to be evacuated and remained at his post to fight the enemy.

The post was once again attacked by another wave of Chinese troops this time with greater intensity of mortar fire. Despite his injury, Sepoy Kanshi Ram brought his gun into action. The enemy waves kept on advancing and closing in on the post. A Chinese officer, along with four Other Ranks, approached close to Sepoy Kanshi Ram and shouted to the men in his trench to surrender.By this time his ammunition was nearly finished, but he hurled a grenade at them and killed the enemy officer and three Other Ranks. He then asked his men in the trench to go back. In the meantime, other Chinese personnel closed in on him and one of them tried to snatch away his Light Machine Gun, while another fired an automatic rifle at him, wounding him again. Despite his injuries, he held on to his gun and pushed the Chinese so skilfully that they fell down. Sepoy Kanshi Ram then grabbed a loaded automatic rifle from the enemy and came back to his platoon with this rifle, as well as his own light machine gun. This was the first Chinese weapon captured by 7 Infantry Brigade. In this action, Sepoy Kanshi Ram displayed indomitable courage, initiative and resourcefulness of a high order.

Why have such acts of gallantry in NEFA, of which there were quite a few, not been highlighted and a picture given to the public as if NEFA went down without a fight?

The following details of our casualties in Ladakh and

for promotion, possibility for an award for gallantry, recognition of good work in some other way, tradition, discipline, vision of glory, personal loyalty and devotion between individuals, or just patriotism? Perhaps a little of everything.

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NEFA will speak for themselves :

THE APPROXIMATE CASUALTIES AMONG OUR TROOPS IN NEFA AND LADAKH DURING OPERATIONS AGAINST THE CHINESE IN OCTOBER/NOVEMBER, 1962

	Killed	*Wounded*	*Missing*	*Total*
NEFA	1,150	500	1,600	3,250
Ladakh	230	50	60	340

It will be noted from these figures that five times more men were killed in NEFA than in Ladakh and ten times more were wounded. Yet it has been said that fighting in Ladakh was heavier. What was the yard-stick?

Admittedly we had more troops in NEFA; but the Chinese had proportionately many times more troops and resources against us. Another factor to be borne in mind is that we had been confronting the Chinese in Ladakh for some years before 1962. Consequently we had established some sort of defences against the Chinese in Ladakh over a period; our troops there were acclimatized; we had become familiar with conditions at high altitude. Moreover, we had established a command and control as also a logistical organization. In NEFA, on the other hand, we went near the McMahon Line in right earnest for the first time in 1962 and had hardly established a few small posts along the border before the Chinese launched their attack. We had, therefore, neither enough troops, command and control set-up nor a logistical organization to support our Forces in NEFA. These are undeniable details which have been deliberately shielded from the public, by interested parties and cleverly manipulated propaganda. Their aim was to establish a general impression that Lt Gen Kaul was an incompetent General but had been put in a responsible command like that of NEFA by Menon and Nehru, due to whose favouritism wrong types of men were being given high positions undeservedly. (Similar insinuations

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were made against Thapar also.) Ladakh, according to them, was commanded by professionally competent Generals, who had given a 'good' account of themselves.

The fact is that the Chinese armies had overwhelmed the Indian armies identically in NEFA and Ladakh and stopped in both these areas on reaching their claim lines when they declared a unilateral ceasefire.

I have analysed in this chapter why the Chinese attacked us on 20 October 1962 or attacked us at all; why they carried out a unilateral withdrawal; the reasons for India's failure and China's success; and what India should do in future. The possible answers to these questions are given below.

China attacked us all along our borders in order to establish herself as one of the great powers of the world; to give a warning to Russia and the USA that Asia where China was the strongest power belonged to her sphere of influence and not theirs; she did so to impress countries of Asia—like Nepal, Burma, Ceylon and Cambodia and even Sikkim and Bhutan, and the West—by her military might and thus wean them away from India, as also to show the effectiveness of their own system of government and economic development. China also wanted to show the Russians that India's non-alignment policy was a myth; to humiliate India, which was posing as a rival in the ideological, political and economic fields and shatter its economy and morale as also to discredit our democratic structure; to 'teach a lesson' to the Tibetan people and the Dalai Lama that a 'weak' country like India could give them no material help against a 'strong' country like China. Finally, to divert the attention of her own people from internal difficulties (e.g. failure of the great leap forward, etc.) and give them a new unifying slogan, i.e. the 'imperialist threat' from India.

China timed its attack on 20 October 1962 perhaps

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because it happened to coincide with the Cuban crisis (20–26 October). She thought that while America, Russia and the world were preoccupied, she would have a free hand. Also, the last few days of October heralded the end of the monsoon and advent of good weather, a suitable time for an advance in NEFA (and Ladakh).

China carried out a unilateral—'peaceful'—withdrawal for many reasons. (As Clausewitz has said: A conqueror is always a lover of peace.) She expected that India would crack up and beg for peace; this of course did not happen; she achieved her limited objective of taking possession of certain territories which she considered necessary for the defence of Tibet; she was afraid that if she retained these territories, her lines of communication might be impossible to maintain specially in the winter; and if the military conflict was prolonged, she apprehended the areas she had occupied might be used for an attack against her by USA and the western powers whom she was unable to face single-handed at the time. As she had not taken USSR and other socialist countries into confidence, she did not expect their support; she was surprised by the pronounced reaction against her attack in India, by the world at large and specially on the part of USSR and the USA; nor did she expect the Cuban crisis to subside so soon and was surprised at the reasonable settlement by Khrushchev and Kennedy for which she vehemently attacked the former because it thwarted her plans. Lastly, she wanted to impress Afro-Asian countries that she had no aggressive or territorial designs and wanted to make an impression on the whole world by a dramatic and generous gesture (by a victorious army). She was, however, careful to warn us that she reserved her right to come back if we reoccupied the area she was vacating. Once her aims had been fulfilled, she saw no reason for staying on.

Reaction in Western countries to the Chinese aggression in India was a degree of satisfaction that their and not the

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Indian view of China had proved to be correct and that India had learnt a good lesson. Secondly, that India would not be able to now live in an artificial world of her own creation—but would face realities of life. Thirdly that it would lead to a re-appraisal of her foreign policy. They now hoped that there might be joint defence of India and Pakistan against a common threat. They thought that India had three beliefs: that Peking would *not* attack; that she could defend herself without aid from the West and that the Soviet Union would aid India against China. They now saw that all these beliefs proved to be wrong.

According to Senator Russel, the equipment given by USA to India might well fall in the Chinese hands as India, he thought, was incapable of defending herself. Other critics of India feared that Soviet aid might build her up into a great power and enable her to bully her neighbours in due course. (We also have many friends abroad like Mr. Harriman in USA who consider the Indian policy of befriending USSR is no longer suicidal naivete.)

The Soviet reaction was summed up in their comment after the Indo-Chinese war in 1962, that the Chinese were their brothers and the Indians their (dear) friends. (Though today the position is not the same.)

There were several tactical and logistical reasons for our failure in October-November 1962. Although the Indian and Chinese armies had been confronting each other along our borders for some years, with possibilities of war between them, little attempt was made in the Indian Army at any level to study seriously or practise the Chinese tactics or how to counter them, nor to understand their political and military behaviour. There was also lack of inter-service co-ordination at various levels. Nor did Government take extraordinary steps in time to strengthen the Armed Forces in order to cope with this grave situation.

Much has been heard of the Chinese waves of attack, regardless of life—the human sea tactics. Actually, their

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current tactics practises conventional warfare in all its aspects, though it has been strongly influenced by guerilla warfare. They now depend on fire and mobility—the essence of all tactics—and make good use of terrain. In open country, they attack conventionally. It is only in close country and narrow fronts that they come in waves to gain momentum and carry it forward into the interior of the enemy position. They do not just use brutal force, but employ sound tactics. In fact, it would amount to wishful thinking if we were to dismiss their war technique by use of slogans.

It has been said that some Chinese soldiers advanced in forward areas without weapons. This was not so. Only members of their labour corps came without arms along with their forward troops and picked up any weapons en route they chanced to come by or from our dead.

Before the Corps I commanded in NEFA was raised overnight, there was a general doubt in most minds at various headquarters whether a battle between the Chinese and ourselves would come so soon. Therefore, there was little sense of urgency apparent amongst most of us. Instead of waking up well ahead, we began to stir belatedly, only after the Chinese intruded in the Thag La—Dhola area. Events then moved too fast for us.

Our organizations and establishments were unsuited both in weapons, equipment and logistics for mountain warfare and compared unfavourably with their Chinese counterparts in this respect. We inducted troops at short notice from all parts of India into NEFA. Apart from the fact that they were not acclimatized for operating at high altitudes (it takes some time to get used to such heights), the hasty concentrations resulted in officers and men arriving in the operational area neither physically nor mentally equipped for the tasks ahead of them. Most units came with serious shortages in weapons and in such essential items as wireless sets, digging tools and winter clothing,

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which had to be obtained and supplied to them in their new locations, resulting in infructuous strain on our lean resources. This also resulted in a lack of esprit dé corps.

The Indian Army broke up the composition of various Divisions and Brigades during October and November 1962 and, therefore, adversely affected the cohesion of many formations. For instance, 5 and 11 Infantry Brigades were put under command of 2 Infantry Division which should have really been kept as an integral part of 4 Infantry Division (to which they had always belonged). We also transferred battalions from one Brigade to another. This resulted in units and formations working together as 'strangers.' Most of these re-groupings took place with orders of authorities at a higher level than mine.

Our intelligence system compared unfavourably with that of the Chinese. They had systematically introduced agents into India in general and NEFA in particular (whereas we had lagged in this respect). Their agents built up a net-work for reporting back information to the Chinese. Some element of indoctrination of local population was achieved. Such agents are known to have taken up employment with our army units in various capacities and the NEFA administration. The Chinese often knew about our military build-up and plans in a particular area in advance whereas similar knowledge about them was denied to us due to faulty intelligence. Many elements in the local population of NEFA gave them support.

The Chinese troops against us could move lightly by night (and hence had greater mobility to move over difficult territory) and adopted many ruses like bird calls; they came in disguise of local tribals, used interpreters shouting Hindi words in battle and sent their own troops wearing our uniform (which they removed from our dead) against us which confused our troops more than once. The enemy deceived us by moving bodies of troops by day in one direction and attacking us at night from another. He surrounded

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us at times in different localities from all sides, firing on us from various directions. Although this fire was not well aimed, it created confusion, allowed the enemy to break through our Forces and caused panic as also diversion of our fire support from the main axis of his advance. The Chinese also set up road blocks to cut our lines of communication and isolated our Forces.

Our patrolling was generally ineffective. We were unable to obtain any identification of the enemy nor did we capture a single Chinese prisoner either in Ladakh or in NEFA during operations in 1962, whereas the Chinese took many of our men as prisoners. They treated them indifferently till they decided in April next year to return them when their treatment improved. They created misunderstandings between our officers and other ranks by clever propaganda. For instance, some of them would pose to be officers and then sweep floors and do other menial work, giving the impression that our officers did not equate themselves with our men as they did.

We should have trained and prepared ourselves for what I have described above (and below also) over a period of many years. No overnight action could be of much use now.

The Chinese had deployed far greater fire power[34] against us than we had against them. They had more automatic weapons and artillery than us. Essential items for preparation of defences were not available to us as they were to the Chinese. Engineer units organic to formations were deficient of basic equipment. Most of our wireless sets and signal equipment were old and too heavy to be carried. It was also unsuitable for operating in mountainous terrain. Signal spares were deficient. Our communica-

34 The Chinese Army had greater mobility and fire-power over all as also in each infantry battalion than we. A Dakota which came to drop supplies for us on the 20th in the Dhola area was fired upon by the Chinese for the first time by an anti-aircraft gun from Thag La. We, however, could not bring similar weapons so far forward due to logisticial 'difficulties'

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tions broke down almost invariably when units and formations withdrew from various battles. The Chinese did not depend on wireless alone. They used verey lights, visual signals, bird calls and other simplified methods of communications.

Due to inadequate road and air maintenance covers, our ammunition and supply stocks in forward areas were often deficient. We were short of administrative organizations which we tried to raise at the last minute. Our rations were unnecessarily elaborate. Whereas the Chinese could do with rice, salt, tea without milk or sugar, our troops did not observe the same austerity in this respect. The Chinese carried three days' hard scales of rations on their body.

During November 1962, we required approximately 260 tons of stores and rations to be dropped by air every day in 2 and 4 Infantry Division areas instead of which only sixty to eighty tons were dropped due to shortage of transport aircraft available. Our build-up, therefore, for a particular operation was always much slower than that of the enemy who concentrated superior Forces at different places and attacked us first. We were also unable to take advantage of certain operational situations due to this slow rate of our build-up. We had a shortage of trained pilots and neither built up nor extended our airfields in accordance with our requirements before embarking upon these operations. Our supply dropping equipment was defective and a large percentage of parachutes failed to open with the result that the loads either went astray or were destroyed on dropping. We did not have sufficient pioneers or local labour to carry our loads. Many civilian porters fled when there was a threat of enemy action or soon after operations commenced. We had no hold on them like the Chinese who, I understand, had their labour integrated in their units. We made no suitable arrangements of shelter or provisions of warm clothing for our labour working at high altitudes. We were short of animal transport.

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Our winter clothing was too elaborate and seldom available in the requisite quantities, whereas the Chinese wore a thickly padded inexpensive uniform for winter. Our arrangements for evacuating casualties from the field of battle were far from satisfactory. This is borne out by the number of wounded handed over to us by the enemy (whom our units left behind before withdrawal) from all fronts.

The Chinese had a far greater proportion of fighting men than those employed on administration. In other words, they had more teeth and less tail. They had built up a road much nearer their forward posts than we had, had better mobility and therefore found much easier to regroup their Forces or maintain them logistically. They lived hard, moved fast and were physically tough.

Lastly, we made a great mistake in not employing our Air Force in a close support role during these operations. It was perhaps considered that China theoretically enjoyed strategic advantage over India, particularly since her occupation of Tibet. On this account, it was clearly the Chinese threat of strategic air action against Indian cities which kept the offensive air elements of the I.A.F., such as had been deployed, firmly grounded during the land operations in Ladakh and NEFA. This was, however, an assumed threat; its size and capability[35] was never mooted in any political appreciations and might well, in the light of more reliable intelligence information, have been revealed to be insignificant. Our intelligence set-up, of course, knew little on this subject and was only adept at presuming some facts and not realizing that dispensation of exaggerated information about the enemy was as dangerous as understating vital facts.

35 The Chinese aircraft had to operate from airfields located at considerable heights and hence could not have carried much load for purposes of bombing. It is doubtful if their fighters could have operated at all as such aircraft cannot operate from airfields at such high altitudes due to technical difficulties in landing and take off.

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It is an indication of our extraordinary political ineptitude that notwithstanding such intelligence as was in fact available on the Chinese Air Force build-up in Tibet, no air defence arrangements had been ordered at all to meet the assumed threat over the period of three years since the Chinese brazenly seized Longju in NEFA. The professional judgements of the Air Force commanders had been completely disregarded and their operational plans ignored to the extent that they called for greater infra-structural resources.

If the reports of the Chinese air threat on the scale thought to be present were correct, then why[36] was it that no suitable measures were taken such as acquiring additional fighter aircraft, training the requisite number of pilots; why no suitably sited airfields had been constructed and the existing ones improved as an elementary requirement for the Indian Air Force to meet this threat, at least to some extent. If, however, the reports referred to above were known to be incorrect or only partially correct, which probably was the case, then to hold the tactical Air Force element on the leash while the Chinese attacks developed made neither military nor political sense and could be due to nothing but much confused thinking about retaliation and escalation of the air war.

Unfortunately, it was the reluctance on the part of the I.A.F. to be able to mount offensive sorties as a legitimate exercise of self-defence which added to the fears of the Government in Delhi. If the Air Staff had undertaken to do this, the political appreciation might have been different (?)

36 We were short of aircraft of all types and of airfields. The latter lacked radar and other essential equipment. There is a rule that a pilot who has not flown for two months must fly in a dual trainer before flying solo. Many dual trainer aircraft were lying operationally grounded for lack of spares. Other aircraft were awaiting repairs, which were delayed due to lack of maintenance facilities. There was shortage of flying clothing including oxygen masks which a number of pilots had to borrow from others who were not flying. This hampered flying and was a sad state of affairs. The latter was generally true even in 1965.

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and the participation of the Air Force directly in the land battles, without undue regard to the requirements of air superiority, would have introduced an entirely new element in our confrontation with China. It would also have disclosed the unreasonableness of the Chinese communication and supply systems for the maintenance of any sizeable Air Force for sustained operations from bases sited at an altitude of about 12,000—15,000 feet.

Above all, diplomatically as well as militarily, air action restricted to tactical areas would have been a sophisticated move of enormous significance. It would, on the one hand, have demonstrated our willingness and determination to employ *all* the means at our disposal to defend our frontiers against large-scale Chinese incursion and, on the other, it would have revealed to some extent and with greater realism the weaknesses in our air defence equipment and organization which joint exercises had to do later. In the worst situation, it would have brought in, if we had so wished and for so long as we had desired, powerful deterrent elements of the highly mobile Air Forces of our friends with little risk of such an eventuality inviting the Soviets into the fray—in 1962—and enlarging the area of the conflict.

I have heard two theories being advanced as to how we should have defended NEFA against the Chinese in October/November 1962. Some recommended that we should have drawn the Chinese up to what was called the Inner Line, deep into our territory and compelled them to prolong their L of C, cut them from the rear and annihilate them. There were others who advocated that we should have drawn the Chinese in the plains when they would have had even a longer L of C and made short work of them. This was easier said than done. Firstly, the Chinese know something about military problems. They would, therefore, not have walked into our trap. But, suppose they did oblige us, we should have then had the means to cut their L of C and

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deal with them suitably. Actually, we neither positioned sufficient Forces and supporting arms, including fighter cover, armour and logistics, in time, nor did we take many other steps necessary for such a venture. Instead, we hastily assembled our Forces, as we do in most emergencies, at the last minute and on an ad hoc basis. You cannot destroy strong enemy Forces anywhere with such lack of preparation. Lastly, since our Government were determined to expel the Chinese from the Dhola-Thag La area, where they had aggressed, the question of fighting them elsewhere did not arise.

What, perhaps, we should have done was to anticipate events and isolate or keep the Chinese at bay through our diplomatic skill, giving us sufficient time to get prepared even though they had violated our territory in Thag La-Dhola area in 1962, as they had done in Longju in 1959. In this period of lull, we should have expanded and strengthened our own Forces, sought and received foreign military aid, and also arranged—as we did in 1963—for some friendly Powers to come to our rescue, in an emergency, by providing us an air umbrella. In the meantime, we should have, after vigorous training, poised our Forces suitably along our borders and compelled the Chinese to fight us on the ground of our choice.

To sum up: the Chinese had prepared themselves thoroughly for this war whereas we had not. Before we embark on operations against the Chinese or any other enemy in future, we must study their ways of warfare, acquire sufficient knowledge of guerilla tactics, learn the art of improvisation, travel light on austere rations and position our Forces in the right place, in time. We must also have an army of sufficient strength, having adequate air, armour, artillery, engineer, signal and logistical support, physically up to the rigours of the inhospitable terrains in which it has to fight and with a high state of training and leadership. What our Armed Force needs is not only adequate weapons

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and equipment but a radical re-orientation of its mental outlook. We must infuse in it an inspired spirit and the will to fight to the bitter end. Also, we must develop the ability to mobilize the whole nation speedily to the active support of its Armed Force in time of war, both in word and in deed.

In building up the future defence of her borders, India must hereafter consider who her neighbours are and what her relationship should be with each of them. Chanakya—also known as Kautilya—said over two thousand years ago on the subject of neighbours: 'The king who is situated anywhere immediately on the circumference of the conqueror's territory is termed the enemy; the king who is likewise situated close to the enemy but separated from the conqueror only by the enemy, is termed the friend (of the conqueror).....'

When NEFA fell under circumstances which were beyond my control, I was betrayed by many who should have stood by me. I do not know if anyone appreciated the handicaps under which I had functioned and the efforts I had made to retrieve a dismal situation, or that to win or lose in battle is a part of the game. No one was prepared, publicly, to share the responsibility for what happened in NEFA where I had been sent at the eleventh hour under extremely unfavourable conditions. Hence my critics chanted in chorus a hymn of hate against me and labelled me as the prime architect of the NEFA debacle. In spite of life-long and dedicated services which I had rendered to the country and the Army, my reputation and military honour were trampled upon and besmirched systematically by malicious vilification. A whispering[37] campaign was engineered in every possible quarter, which, among other things, went to the extent

37 Referring to much gossip against me, the late Prime Minister Nehru said in the Parliament on 8 November 1962: 'The extraordinary things said against General Kaul who was in over-all charge of the NEFA command were unjust. In sheer courage initiative and hardwork, I doubt if we can find anybody to beat him.'

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of alleging that I had malingered during the NEFA operations. Seeing myself thus humiliated without justification, I was driven to the end of my tether and refused to reconcile to this disparagement. I felt that time had come for me to say farewell to my profession, under a compelling situation. I was not the first soldier to have been in that frame of mind and in similar circumstances.

Fate and foes had conspired against me. Being made of human clay, I found this situation quite intolerable. Moreover, the shackles and protocol of service would have never given me a suitable chance to bring certain facts to public notice and also vindicate myself. This I could only do as a free man. I, therefore, decided to give up my military career which was so dear to me. Now that ceasefire had come and the war was over, my conscience was clear that I was not taking this step during hostilities.

After thinking over the matter for three days or so, I called my trusted staff officer, Brigadier I. D. Verma, a reliable, competent and pleasant individual, and asked him to type out my request for premature retirement which I worded in a language which should raise no arguments. I said that although our reverses in NEFA were due to the enemy's superiority over us in numbers, weapons, logistics, organization and training, but as they took place whilst I was in command, and as my position in the Army had become untenable (due to vicious propaganda), it would be in the interests of service and in keeping with military custom and tradition that I put in my papers.

General Adams of the U.S. Army and General Hull, C.I.G.S., British Army, visited my Headquarters along with Lt Gen Sen on, I think, 25 November. After I had briefed the two foreign Generals on our current situation, I took Lt Gen Sen aside and gave him my request for voluntary retirement in writing.

Three days later, when I said good-bye to my officers at Headquarters 4 Corps and went to the Tezpur airport to

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fly back to Delhi, I had a lump in my throat. The party which flew back with me included a doctor[38] as I was not well again.

It would be too simple to say, as some of my contemporaries had said airily, that instead of sticking it out, I was taking the 'easier' course of quitting. This is a matter of opinion. I think to give up a powerful position which you can retain is not so easy. Moreover, there are certain situations which some can tolerate and others cannot. All human beings cannot think alike under all conditions. In any case, logic alone cannot decide such issues.

I landed in Delhi a few hours later. My wife, Maj Gen Dhillon, Brigadier Pachnanda and Colonel Khanna received me on arrival. Dhanno heard about my request for retirement only when I met her. She gave me a brave and approving smile.

The news of my arrival spread. Many people came to see me: politicians, members of parliament, civil and military officials, relations and friends. They all pressed me to withdraw my request for retirement. Many wrote to me to the same effect. For instance, a gallant comrade, Maj Gen Raiwind Singh Garewal, who was universally revered as a tough soldier in the army, wrote to me in touching terms:

> . . Some of us were very upset at your going away. I am a small fry and in no way involved in the high-ups but the departure of a man of very high integrity, the will to get things done and above all human and fair will be a very great loss to the Armed Forces at a juncture like this. I am not trying to flatter you in any manner but can assure you this Army will be the poorer for having permitted you to quit. . . . You are still on leave and I most humbly request you to reconsider your decision to leave the Army. . . . Some may not like you. So What? *We know you are no coward.* . . . .

My wife, however, agreed with me that I should stand firm and not retrace my steps under any conditions.

38 Major Khanna of the Army Medical Corps, who had taken excellent care of me in NEFA, was returning with me to Delhi.

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An inspired news item came out in the press that General Chaudhuri had personally gone to Tezpur 'to relieve me of my Command.' Actually Chaudhuri and Manekshaw, my successor, reached Tezpur *after* I had left and had never any intention of reaching there earlier. The fact that I had voluntarily asked for retirement from the Army came out in the press a little later.

Nehru sent for me informally soon after I reached Delhi. As I confronted him, he sat like a statue. 'Bijji, I know how you feel, but you should have never resigned. Why did you?' he asked.

'Sir,' I replied, 'for many good reasons which I would prefer not to discuss.'

'What exactly do you mean?' he enquired. 'There is no need for you to give up the Army. I know many unjust things have been said about you. But I don't believe them, nor do many others. I have defended you publicly more than once. You have many friends who know your worth. You must think again,' Nehru concluded.

I saw General Chaudhuri officially on 4 December. After greeting me conventionally, taking a puff at his cigarette and pacing up and down in the room, he said to me patronisingly: 'We all have bad luck, sometimes Bijji. If you don't press your request for retirement, I am prepared to rehabilitate you in the Army.'

Here he was throwing a carrot towards me and await his favours. At this time the memory of some incidents flashed across my mind which I will relate below.

For instance, when I heard in 1959 that he had a heart attack, I hastened to send him a sympathetic letter. In reply he wrote a long-winded rigmarole on 12 January 1960, harping on the fact that it had *not* been a heart attack. He made many insinuations in this letter to which I gave the following reply:

'I am surprised to receive a long sermon you have administered to me

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on your health. Quite obviously, you have read much between my lines .... You have pointed out to me certain maxims of life and how you avoid hitching your wagon to the stars of the moment (sic). I think we both know what each of us has done in our military careers. There is little need, therefore, for you to relate to me certain missionary aspects of life which I have both preached and practised and which I know many others have only preached! In the light of what you have written, I feel sorry that I made any enquiries about your health and will refrain from doing so in future....'

To this letter I received the following reply from Chaudhuri, on 16 January 1960:

I am somewhat sad that my letter of 12 January 1960 has apparently caused you to take offense. As a matter of fact I wrote it hoping *that you would help me*.... I felt that with this knowledge (of the whole case) you as a well wisher could authentically quash unfounded rumours. I added my philosophy of life so that you could also deal with charges of ambition (against me). I have never read anyone a 'sermon' in my life, and it is too late for me to start now; *particularly with an old friend like yourself*.

I hope this clears the whole matter up.

With my usual regards,

Yours sincerely,
Muchu Chaudhuri.

I also remembered how he had requested me in 1961—as I have already described earlier—to put in a good word (for him) in the right quarters.

The memory of these and the cavalcade of other events I have mentioned in this book went through my head. The same Chaudhuri was now telling me that if I stayed on in the Army, he would rehabilitate me. Drawing a deep breath, controlling my temper and in a cold and calculated voice I said to him: 'I am glad you recognize that I have had bad luck! You know that I never vacillate. My request for retirement therefore stands.'

Three days later Defence Minister Chavan sent for me. Chaudhuri went with me. Chavan asked me if I was

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adamant in my decision to quit the Army. I said I was. He then said he would forward my request to Nehru.

Nehru sent for me again. He told me he had tried to persuade me to stay on but that he understood I had told Chavan and Chaudhuri that my heart was set on quitting. He said Chaudhuri had sent in a long tirade in which he had made all sorts of accusations against me without substantiating them.

When Nehru conveyed to me the gist of Chaudhuri's allegations[39] against me—levelled behind my back and which he did not have the courage to do on my face—I was stunned. He said Chaudhuri had not sent my dossier, as is customary in such cases, along with my papers, from which the veracity or otherwise of some of his comments on me could have been officially verified. Chaudhuri had presumably not sent up the dossier to Nehru lest the latter saw some excellent confidential reports which Chaudhuri himself had given me in previous years and which would have contradicted his present indictment of me. Moreover, in the wake of our recent reverses and the resultant reaction in the country, based on inspired propaganda, Nehru said he was sick and tired of various controversies and did not wish to make an issue out of this case at that juncture. He finally told me that in view of these unfortunate considerations, he was sorry he had just initialled the file. I said I quite understood the predicament in which he was and that he need have no qualms of conscience on this account.

39 Chaudhuri had praised me in several annual confidential reports in previous years in contradiction to what he had said now. For instance, in one of these reports he had described my integrity as beyond question, and that I had great loyalty to my country and my service; that I was a good and helpful member of a team, had tremendous enthusiasm, vivid imagination and great loyalties. He went on to say that I was equally fitted for command and staff. He had written to me letters, as I have shown elsewhere in this book, paying me various compliments. This was a typical example of hypocrisy. On the one hand, Chaudhuri had given me bouquets verbally and in writing for years on end and here he was, stabbing me in the back.

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Many friends asked me to withdraw my request for retirement before Government passed orders on this case. They pointed out to me many advantages of my staying on in service. Mr. Galbraith, the American Ambassador, called me for lunch and expressed his personal regret at my having asked for retirement. Our President, Radhakrishnan, whose A.D.C. General I was, also saw me in this connection and told me that Nehru was distressed at my decision to retire from the Army. Welles Hengen, author of *After Nehru Who?* in which he devoted a chapter on me also, wrote to me on 10 December: 'It seems to me absolutely essential from every point of view that you continue the service career which you have pursued with such distinction for more than thirty years. It is...vastly important at this juncture....You again take counsel with Nehru that you are willing to continue in service. ...Your retirement from the service will enable your detractors to operate freely....Many Members of Parliament and other dignitaries suggested that I should retrace my steps but there was no question of my doing so, like some others, who had resigned in the past and then, within a day or two 'on persuasion' changed their mind and withdrew their resignation.

Just about this time, I received a letter from the Recce Halsey Agency from Los Angeles asking me to send them some publishable and motion-picture material (relating to my experiences) which I did not do.

On 11 December, General Chaudhuri rang me up at my house to say that Government had accepted my request for retirement. Here was the end of my career at the age of fifty, many years before my time. As Sir Edwin Arnold has said, 'Who shall shut out fate!' I was thoroughly disillusioned and wanted to get away from everything and specially from individuals whose scheming behaviour had left a bad taste in my mouth. I wanted to be as far away from this scene as possible, if necessary to distant lands.

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I was reminded then of an apt couplet by an Urdu poet:

Gardish-i-ayyam tera shukriya
Ham ne har pehloo se duniya dekh li
(Thanks to the vagaries of fate that I have seen all aspects of life.)

Though my health was cracking up and my daughter was not well again, I also decided to give up my residence, 5, York Road. I asked for alternative accommodation which was allotted but which I declined as I thought that instead of making too many shifts, I should move once and for all to private accommodation under my own arrangements.

I wrote a letter to Nehru on 18 December 1962, bidding him farewell. He replied to this letter the same day:

My dear Bijji,

I am sorry you are retiring. I tried to induce you not to do so but as you were determined on it, I could not do anything about it. The events which have led to your retirement are sad and have distressed[40] many of us. I am sure, however, that you were *not* specially to blame for them. *A large number of people and perhaps just the circumstances were responsible for them.*

I am sure that a man like you, full of energy and patriotism, should not merely rest without doing anything useful for the country. Perhaps a little later you can find this useful work. . . .

Yours affectionately

Jawaharlal Nehru

I was to give up 5, York Road on 11 January. Nehru

40 Nehru announced in the Lok Sabha in August 1963 that no Army Generals could be blamed for the military reverses against the Chinese in 1962. Nehru also wrote on 22 December 1962 in his monthly letter to the Chief Ministers of all Provinces that it was an honourable gesture on the part of Generals Thapar and Kaul to have voluntarily retired from the Army (prematurely).

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asked me and my daughter Anu to see him at his house one evening. To Anu (who was far from well) he said affectionately, 'You must look after yourself and your father.' Then abruptly, to control his emotion, he rose and went out of the room. On the 10th, Mrs Indira Gandhi came to look us up at 5, York Road. This was a thoughtful gesture.

On 11 January 1963, I gave up 5, York Road which had been the scene of many rejoicings. When my entire paraphernalia was moving out in trucks and I was about to leave, after breaking up my house, I saw a marriage procession passing by my entrance! How often one sees such contradictory situations!

My luggage was dumped in a store in Delhi Cantonment helter-skelter and I spent a few days with Maj Gen Bhagwati Singh. I then went along the Grand Trunk Road in my car staying on the way at Mathura and some other places. After spending a few weeks like this, nomadically, I returned to Delhi to attend the marriage of a relative. As Nehru happened to be one of the guests at this function, he met me there and asked where I was staying in Delhi. I told him that as I had no house of my own, I had shifted to Geeta Ashram—a religious institution in Delhi Cantonment—(to whose funds I had donated for building two rooms for guests, in which ironically I was now living myself). He gave me a look of pained surprise.

A few days later Nehru sent for me. He asked me why I was inviting so many hardships and 'dissolving' myself; I had given up my job, my house, had shifted to an ashram, where I was living in discomfort despite my ill-health and that of my daughter. He then went on to say that there was a possibility of my being offered the Lieutenant-Governorship[41] of Himachal Pradesh at Simla. As I never heard any further on the subject thereafter, I think this proposal fizzled out for some reason.

41 Maj General M. S. Himmatsinhiji had also told me that he had heard of this possibility from Mr. Shastri who was then our Home Minister.

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The hot weather was setting in. The life in the Ashram was no bed of roses, specially when I and my daughter were not well. This life was in sharp contrast to the one I had got used to. No more was I in the thick of national activity, nor did I have any status or authority, crested stationery, no more stars or flags, no guards or personal staff, no batmen, no invitations to important functions, no more Chairman, President or the Chief Patron of various societies and organizations, and no more fanfares. After working around the clock for years on end, here I was with time hanging on me. Finding me in this situation, I was given the cold shoulder by many, which hurt. Among friends, while many retained their warmth, a few turncoats proved fickle and disappeared like dew. A sense of utter desolation and depression descended upon me as a result. According to *Gurubani*—a Sikh scripture—in adversity even friends become foes. But after some effort, Dhanno and I got used to this sort of life. It is amazing how one adjusts oneself to one's surroundings, if one has to.

At this hour, whilst my foes rejoiced, my sheet-anchor was my wife[42] who stood by me like a rock. She never showed any signs of dejection at what had happened and accepted everything in a spirit of complete resignation. I must say here that she has never asked for much. She has led an austere life, devoted to God and selfless work. She is as pure as pure can be and my life's greatest asset.

On 24 April 1963, I wrote an official letter (which Chaudhuri saw) to the Officiating C.G.S. In this letter I said that I understood an enquiry was being conducted on the operations in NEFA by Lt Gen Henderson Brooks, that many commanders and staff officers who had served under me in these operations had appeared before him; and that I should have thought that I, who had been the Corps Commander in NEFA, would also be asked to appear before this enquiry. I went on to say that the findings of this

42 My whole family stood by me on this occasion solidly.

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enquiry might be a subject of discussion in the Parliament and figure in the press as had happened in the past. As my military reputation was involved, and many aspersions had been cast on me in the press and elsewhere, I requested, I might be given a chance to *appear* before Henderson Brooks so that I could have an opportunity to give my version of these events. (A facility denied to me orally so far though the NEFA enquiry had been in session for several months and was about to finalize its proceedings when I volunteered to appear before it.) Chaudhuri informed me through his C.G.S. that I could appear before the NEFA enquiry (under Henderson Brooks) the next day at Jullundur.

Yet when I reported to Lt Gen Henderson Brooks, he told me that his orders were not to examine me orally. This was an amazing situation. Here I was sent to Henderson Brooks by Chaudhuri to give oral evidence and was being told by the former that he had orders to the contrary. The only academic or ostensible reason could be the fact that Henderson Brooks was junior to me in the rank of Lieutenant General and as such could *not* 'examine' me; or that I had already submitted my views on the operations in NEFA earlier in writing and no further evidence from me was considered necessary. If these arguments held good, why did Chaudhuri send me to appear before Henderson Brooks at all? He should have told me that there was no need for me to be examined, due to these or other reasons, *before* I left Delhi for Jullundur.

Here was a body [43] whose 'findings' were to be discussed in our Parliament later but which was *not* prepared to give me—the Corps Commander who had been maligned by so many—an opportunity to give oral evidence—a facility offered to several others, who had served under me in

43 It would be interesting one day for some statisticians and historians to analyse which witnesses were called, who were omitted to give evidence before this enquiry committee and why?

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NEFA. I informed Nehru of this in writing. (Why have the *full* proceedings of the NEFA enquiry report not been made public to this day? Was it because they contained some embarrassing references to the Government's responsibility in this episode?)

I then suggested to Henderson Brooks that as my oral evidence could not be taken by him, I should give my version of the battle in NEFA in 1962 to his enquiry committee in writing. When he agreed to this suggestion, against which he had no orders, I gave to him such a statement.

I was due to retire on 15 May 1963. A week earlier I thought to myself that I should not leave the Army after a life-long association without saying good-bye to it. The only way I could do this was to see its Chief and bid farewell to the Army through him. When I entered Chaudhuri's office and saluted, he left his chair and came towards me, as a token of courtesy. I told him I had come to say adieu to the Army before I went away for good,which gesture he said he appreciated. He then said he had one question to ask and whether I could reply. I said that though I had not come to answer any questions on the last day of my service, if he was particular, I would try. He said he knew the Army was asked to fight against the Chinese in 1962 without sufficient resources, but why did Thapar or I *not* 'thump the table' to say *no* to Government in such a situation? I gave him a suitable reply.

I had never met or heard of Teja till we came across each other at a Party in Delhi in April 1963. He told me then that he had called at my residence whilst I was still serving in the Army sometime in 1962 when he was unable to see me as I was indisposed that day. Teja offered me an assignment abroad the details of which he sent to me in a letter in which he said :

I am engaged in doing a number of industrial projects of some conse-

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quence in India among which is the Jayanti Shipping Company. I am presently planning a 120 Megawatt thermal power station, a 300,000 tons per year pig iron plant and a 9,000 tons per year heavy duty forging plant.

To initiate and develop all these projects, a great deal of preparatory and executive work is necessarily done abroad in countries from where we obtain the engineering help, plant and machinery. Trained administrators of the highest calibre are needed for this sort of work.

I would be delighted indeed if I could have you associate with me in the capacity of a Senior Adviser in these projects and plans. My intention is to have you take charge of an office in Tokyo which I am presently establishing... A person of your calibre and experience would be a tremendous asset in this connection... Your association with me and these projects will be for as long as you care to be connected with them....

I am writing this letter to you in this informal manner since I consider anything you and I do together...based on mutual respect and association, (will be) directed to the single goal of the economic and industrial development of India. Your initiative in all matters connected with this work will be much appreciated by me.

I made this request to you verbally in the last few days and have since then mentioned it to the Defence Minister, Mr. Y. B. Chavan. I thought it most proper I acquaint him with this matter. I had the impression he looked upon this favourably... I am looking forward to your reply to my offer before I leave India on April 29th, 1963.

Teja offered me a salary of $ 20,000 per year (*not* free of income-tax), which, at the rate of exchange prevailing then, came to about Rs 8,000 per month. My reactions to Teja's proposal were favourable; not because it carried a high[44] salary, most of which was going to disappear in income tax; nor because it offered a life of comfort; but mainly because it would give me—what I was seeking—a chance to divert my mind from my depressing surroundings, and get as far away as possible from the scene of my recent disenchantments. Therefore, after obtaining sanction from Government, I sent to Teja my written acceptance. This is the only background known to me of how Teja took me on.

44 I was drawing Rs. 4,000 per month plus many perquisites in the Army just before retiring.

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In spite of my having informed the Ministry of Defence in writing that my salary with Teja would *not* be tax-free, Chavan whilst answering a question in the Parliament said that it was *free* of income tax. When I met him in his office the following day and represented that the statement he had made in the Parliament on this subject was not correct, on checking up, he regretted having done so, inadvertently. He then corrected his earlier statement but whilst what he said originally had hit the head-lines, his correction went almost unnoticed in the press.

Not a sound was raised by anyone (even to this day) when many others—generals and senior civil servants—took up well paid assignments in the private sector, drawing no less, and some time more, than the salary Teja had offered me. Yet in my case, there was a general uproar.

When I went to say good-bye to Nehru before leaving India, he said he was sorry I was going so far away and told me, sentimentally, not to remain abroad too long but come back soon.

My health was deteriorating further. In fact on the night I was flying from Palam, I felt particularly unwell. Quite a few civilian and military friends had come to see me off. As I stood amidst them, making polite conversation, my legs shook and my head reeled and I just managed to remain on my feet. It was difficult to believe that I, who took pride at his fitness only a few months ago, had come to this pass. In a state of utter exhaustion and helplessness, I was almost on the point of breaking down. I then offered a silent prayer in the hope that I might manage to keep up a brave face till I was airborne. I survived my ordeal somehow till the arrival of my aircraft. I was in a frame of mind in which I did not care where I went.

By the time I reached Tokyo, I felt extremely enervated. My hands and legs were unsteady. I was having difficulty in breathing. I endured the first few days in Japan by the

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skin of my teeth. I wished I had not left my country and come away so far. My life seemed empty and without purpose.

My health improved rapidly under expert medical care and in new environments. After a while, some work took me to London where T. N. Kaul, known among his friends as Tikki, our brilliant Ambassador at Moscow, sent me an invitation to pay him a visit. As I was going to Prague anyhow, I agreed. In Prague I met Simovic who was his country's Vice Foreign Minister and whom I knew well. He was the Czech member of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission when I was Chief of Staff in Korea ten years ago. I had met him again in 1962 as the Czech Ambassador in Delhi. He received me with extreme cordiality and spent much time with me during my three days' stay in Prague. He took me out for a long drive on the picturesque Czech highway and invited me to his home where I met his charming family and another old friend, Winkler, whom I also knew in Korea. He showed me many other features of his fascinating country.

The plane I was taking from Prague to Moscow was indefinitely delayed due to bad weather. I, therefore, had to hang around the airport for several hours and overheard a middle-aged man who had had one too many, talking aloud and derisively of the various Communist States. His faux pas resulted in many raised eyebrows. After a few minutes he was removed from our midst by a policeman and I do not know what happened to this poor dear eventually. Tikki waited for me at the Moscow airport for hours and as no one could give him a clue as to when my plane might come, he went back home. I reached Moscow at two in the morning. The airport was [45] not nearly as modern as that of Rome, Paris or New York. The Customs authorities were good, but the Passport was checked repeatedly by

45 I understand a better airport has been built at Moscow since.

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several different people. I then sat in a taxi and reached the Indian Embassy, about 30 kilometres away, at about 3.30 in the morning. Tikki had his Secretary waiting for me and was up himself soon to welcome me.

It was 7 November and quite cold. We talked till six in the morning when we got ready for the October Revolution Parade which Tikki was anxious I should see, now that I happened to be in Moscow by chance on this date. He had got me a permit for this function from the Russian Foreign Office (MID). When we reached the outskirts of the Red Square where all cars had to halt, and were walking up to our seats, we went through repeated security checks. Tikki was allowed to pass as he carried a diplomatic identity card, but I was stopped by a security guard (before entering the inner circle) who asked me for my passport. I showed him the permit of the MID, but he insisted on seeing my passport. I said it was stipulated nowhere that I was to bring one. The security guard said firmly that without seeing my passport, he would not let me go any further. I was put off by this super security check at a public function—of which I had been given no warning—and first thought of going away. Then I was reminded of what the late Maj Gen V. R. Khanolkar of the Indian Army had old me once. When in trouble or doubt, he used to say, you must shout (your way through). If this did not work, only then did he advise a compromise. This simple formula had stood him in good stead. I, therefore, decided to try this recipe and accordingly shouted at this tough looking cooky—of the security guard—as loudly as my lungs permitted, in Hindustani. This din caused in him a consternation and after wondering what authority I could have had to shout in this manner, he let me proceed. I then witnessed along with Tikki an impressive military array and thousands upon thousands of men, women and children marching with verve, coming in wave after wave. It was a great spectacle.

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I was in Moscow for about a week. In this short period I could only have a quick look at its important sights and visit some selected institutions.[46] I saw quite clearly the great progress[47] USSR was making in various fields and what a formidable power it had become. I also saw what excellent work Tikki was doing in Moscow as our Envoy.

From Moscow I flew back to Tokyo where I heard that Kennedy had been assassinated in USA and that Lt Gen Daulet Singh and some other senior service officers had crashed to death. It was an unlucky day for USA and for India.

I said Sayonara to Japan after staying there for four months. During this period, I met many interesting individuals[48] and saw some fascinating places. Snatching a fleeting glimpse of Honolulu in the Hawaii islands—the fiftieth American State—(where Pearl Harbour took place on 7 December 1941)—I reached San Francisco 'before' I had left Tokyo. Such is the trick the clock plays on you across the international date-line. I eventually reached New York where my wife and two daughters joined me a little later. It was nice having my family with me once again.

I went to Washington, soon after, to stay with B. K. Nehru who was our Ambassador in USA and his wife Fori (I found their stock in America's capital extremely high). The day I went to the Arlington Cemetery it was snowing heavily and was bitterly cold. When I walked up to Kennedy's grave, I observed lined up in a long and linger-

46 I also saw a magnificent performance of the Swan Lake at the Bolshoi and a puppet show at the Kukolny theatres.

47 I found the gap between the elite and the masses in Russia far less pronounced or conspicuous than in most other countries today.

48 I got to know well a distinguished Japanese intellectual (whose name I would prefer not to mention) who, in the course of a conversation, told me that the Japanese people never forgot a slight and added that the West had slighted them severely in World War II. They were humiliated and had undergone untold destruction of life and property. He said finally they would one day avenge their defeat, after those who destroyed Japan had built it up.

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ing queue, men, women and children, walking sorrowfully with bent heads towards where the dead President lay buried. I[49] saw his Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine and other caps lying beside the graves of his two little children and his own, a few flowers and the eternal light. It was heart-rendering that one so young and who had served his country so well lay here amidst the tombs of so many others, silenced for ever. I was touched beyond words.

Early in May I got an invitation from Professor and Mrs Lloyd Rudolph, Dunster House, at the Harvard University to come and give a lecture on India and China. I accordingly went to this great University near Boston, addressed a mixed crowd of students where I was asked many interesting questions at the end of my talk including some on Viet Nam. I later addressed an audience from different parts of the world including Service officers and diplomats. One of the questions put to me was whether there was a possibility of a military coup in India. I snapped back at my questioner whether a coup was likely to succeed in a big democracy like USA. Also, whether he had seen a picture recently exhibited called 'Seven Days in May'. I said that if a coup could fail in USA—as shown in this movie —it was unlikely to succeed in democratic India.

I was delighted to meet, at Harvard, Sussane and Lloyd Rudolph, many other distinguished Professors, Research Scholars, as also Galbraith, who was the U.S. Ambassador in Delhi in 1962. I then saw parts of the Brandeis University situated beautifully across the river near Waltham and took a trip through New England along with my nephew Vinod Mubayi, who was making a mark in that University. I was invited by Professor A. T. Embree, from Kent Hall, Columbia University, New York, to address a selected

49 I recollected a speech in which Kennedy had once reminded his countrymen: 'And so my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.'

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audience there, which I did. Soon after, Louis M. Starr, Director of the Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, New York, wrote to me:

> . . . The office of the Columbia University obtains the intimate recollections of persons who have something to say that seems likely to be of interest to future historians. There is no question in our minds. . . that you have such recollections and we are, therefore, pleased to extend to you an invitation to contribute a memoir to the Oral History Collection (Columbia). . . . The latter already includes some of the most distinguished men of our time and we would be greatly honoured to include you among them. . . . I do hope that you will be willing to embark on this venture for I am confident, that you will find it stimulating and worthwhile.

I enjoyed this venture. Being at Columbia and Harvard Universities was a stimulating experience.

Among these profound matters, the taxi driver of New York also drew my attention. This species is a queer mixture of cordiality and impertinence. It was snowing heavily one afternoon and I was trying to get a cab from opposite the U. N. Building at 45th and York Avenue. I saw many empty taxis rush past me without stopping, despite the frantic waving of my hand. Some were going home with a board 'off-duty' and others had probably earned enough fare and just could not be bothered to stop in the heavy snow and on a slushy road. After freezing in the open for nearly twenty minutes, I got fed up, took a risk, and stood in the middle of the road blocking the way of a cab.

'What do you want', shouted the driver.

'I want to go to 85th and York,' I replied.

'You can't stop traffic like this. Get out of my way,' he threatened, 'before I run you over.'

'No damned fear. I am frozen stiff waiting for a God-damn cab and cannot any more,' I replied.

'But I am going home,' the driver exclaimed!

'I don't care where you are going or where I go, so long

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as I get away from this snow. Why don't you take me to your home?' I inquired, tauntingly.

The driver, who looked like a messenger of death till then, suddenly thawed. He seemed amused at my inquiry and said unexpectedly, 'Get in, quick. I will take you where you are going.' I tipped him heavily at the destination.

I heard in New York on 27 May 1964 that Nehru was dead. I was stunned to hear this news like many of my countrymen. My mind went back to the day when I had gone to say good-bye to him just before going abroad about a year ago and when he had asked me not to remain away from India too long and come back soon. But, alas! Before I could return, he was no more. I and my family then sat in a heap and just wept.

I decided to return to India after Nehru's death. Meanwhile, I started running a temperature daily and had considerable difficulty in breathing once again. I had hoped that I would improve soon but when this condition continued for some weeks, I was admitted to the New York University Hospital (under the care of Doctor Ralston). I was still far from well when I got ready to return home.

Before I left USA, after a stay of about eight months, I took stock of its people and their way of life. The Americans think their country is the biggest and the best in the world. They are frank about their weaknesses. For instance, an American Senator once recorded in his diary about the Senate in USA:

> I place but little reliance on the honesty and truthfulness of most of our Senators. A majority of them are small lights, mentally, weak, and wholly unfit to be Senators... Some are men of wealth who have purchased their positions. Some are men of narrow intellect, limited comprehension and low partisan prejudice....

The American humour is typified by a placard widely publicized: 'Why live if a decent funeral costs only fifty

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dollars.' The Americans want to be liked and are friendly. They revel at work and love their holidays. They are speeding through life as if they are in a great hurry. Great freedom of speech prevails in the States. A typical example of this privilege is what a famous American columnist once said :

> Successful democratic politicians are insecure, intimidated men. They advance politically only as they placate, bribe, seduce, bamboozle or otherwise manage to manipulate the demanding, threatening elements in their constituencies. The decisive consideration is not whether it is polular; not whether it will work well and prove itself but whether the active constitutents like it immediately.

I and Dhanno left New York from the Kennedy airport and reached Delhi on 9 August 1964 after just over a year's stay abroad. I alighted from the plane at Palam broken in health but *not* in spirits. During my stay abroad, I had met many new people and travelled in strange lands. But it was good to be back home. There were the same faces again, the same noise and the same frustrations. But then this was the land in which I was born and where I am to die.

I at once got in touch with my old physician, Maj Gen Inder Singh, who took me in hand. After a rough time in bed for about six weeks, thanks to him, my brother, Babboo and my cousin, Raja, I was on my feet once again. It was the end of October by now.

During the year 1964, the events kept rushing along. Sheikh Abdullah was released from jail and the Kashmir conspiracy case against him withdrawn. Jayaprakash Narayan, the great patriot, went to Rawalpindi as head of a non-official goodwill mission and was called by some of his ungrateful countrymen a traitor in the process.

On 6 February 1965, Partap Singh Kairon, ex-Chief Minister Punjab, was shot dead in his car by four masked gun men twenty miles out of Delhi. On 1 April, Sheikh Abdullah saw Chou En-Lai at Algiers to seek support for

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self-determination for Kashmiris and was interned a month or so later. On 16 April the proposed visit by Shastri to USA was cancelled and followed by much resentment in the country. On 20 May and soon thereafter four parties of Indian mountaineers under Lieut Commander M. S. Kohli climbed the peak of Mount Everest. It certainly had been an eventful year.

In recent months, many interesting foreign and Indian writers, including the noted Canadian biographer of Nehru, Michael Brecher,[50] came to see me. They had series of interviews with me in connection with the books they were writing on India during which they discussed with me many aspects of the Nehru era and other matters including our foreign relations.

I went in July to condole with B. K. Nehru, now in Delhi, as his father had died recently. I got a telephone message there to say that my wife had rushed my daughter, Anu, to the Military Hospital a few minutes ago, as the latter had a sudden haemorrhage. When I reached the hospital, the gynaecologist told Dhanno and me that he thought a caesarean operation would have to be performed on Anu and that he could not guarantee either the life of the mother or the child.

This made me wonder what other misfortunes lay ahead of Anu [51] on the one hand and Dhanno and me on the other. Ever since she was married four years ago, she had had more than her share of adversities. This was her fourth operation. All Dhanno and I could do was to hold our breath and hope for the best.

Anu, on her part, was very brave. She did not turn a hair when she heard of the operation. She was then 'prepared' for her ordeal and lay on the stretcher looking

50 At least one highly placed Minister of our central cabinet had given Brecher a letter of introduction.

51 To whose troubles there seemed to be no end.

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serene and her innocent self. She was thereafter taken in an ambulance to the operation theatre, which was a little distance away. I wished her good luck and she smiled back at me bravely.

Dhanno and I sat glumly in the verandah while Anu went in the operation theatre. The doctor told me before going in that he would take about an hour to perform the operation and that owing to her anaemic condition, he would have to give her a blood transfusion.

For the sixty minutes during which the operation was in progress, I sat helplessly and in great suspense. Anu's face kept fleeting in my thoughts. Time in such situations moves very slowly. In fact, occasionally it seems to stand still. It is amazing how everything dwindles in its importance in such critical moments and what matters more than anything else in the world is the safety of one's kith and kin whose life is menaced. One is prepared to give up all sorts of things if all goes well and makes boundless pledges, which many of us forget as soon as the calamity is averted, offering all kinds of prayers At long last, the doctor came out and told Dhanno and I that the operation had been successful and Anu was doing well.

(Though certain matters discussed in the following pages do not form part of my personal experiences, I am mentioning them as they have some bearing on what I have said so far.)

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The Play is Not Done

'Tis not in mortals to command success.

JOSEPH ADDISON

OUR LEADERS had taken up a posture after Nehru's death which amounted to saying that India's defences had been so strengthened since 1962 that if we were attacked either by Pakistan or China or both, we would be able to take them on at the same time single handed. No doubt, the defence budget had mounted from about Rs 300 crores in 1962 to over Rs 800 crores in 1965-66 and we had expanded our Forces to almost double their size in 1962. We had received much foreign military aid in the shape of weapons and equipment, which we had sought since long. Despite this 'improved situation' in 1965, our Forces still had their troubles.

The Pakistan operations against us in Kashmir were launched in two distinct phases: infiltration and conventional operations. On the 5th of August the 'Gibraltar' Force of about 5000 infiltrators, under Maj Gen Akhtar Hussain Malik, GOC 12 Division, crossed our border in Jammu and Kashmir surreptitiously. It was, however, not admitted by our political or military leaders that a regular invasion had taken place. This Force was equipped with light modern and automatic weapons, had good wireless

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communications and was very mobile. Its aim, apart from sabotage, was to indoctrinate the Kashmiris so that they could rise up in a rebellion against India. The infiltrators carried extra arms to be issued to the Kashmiris who were to be trained in their use. They generally opened fire by night from a distance to cause panic amongst us and beat a hasty retreat when we returned this fire. They received such aid from the local population in Kashmir as guides, porters, food and shelter. The red letter day of the Gibraltar Force was to be 9 August 1965, the anniversary of the arrest of Abdullah in 1953. We first said complacently that only about 1,000 infiltrators had come. Then we conceded that there might have been two or three thousands or even more. We kept deceiving ourselves by under-estimating this threat. We said that the infiltrators were short of food and ammunition and were demoralized by the cold shoulder given to them by the local population, that our Security Forces had dealt with them suitably and that they were on the run. In fact, they committed many acts of sabotage though they did not have as much success as they expected in blowing up bridges, assassinations, disrupting economic. political and the social order as also cutting our lines of communication. Nor did they succeed in causing rebellion among the Kashmiris. But it was also not true to say that they were a complete failure. It was surprising that such a large number of men had managed to slip across our border supposed to be so vigilantly guarded and our ignorance in advance of their plans to do so. In some areas, such as Budil, in the Riasi Tehsil, in the Jammu sector, it took us considerable effort to get rid of the administration which the infiltrators had set up there.

(Indira Gandhi, then Minister of Information and Broadcasting, telephoned to me at my residence in late August and asked if I could see her the next day. When we met, she said it had been suggested by some people, intimately interested in the Kashmir affairs, that I should

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be sent to Kashmir to deal with the problem of infiltrators. She said she was not clear of its exact magnitude as she had received many varied accounts and asked me whether I would be in a position to proceed to Kashmir for this purpose if necessary. I replied in the affirmative. In the mean time Pakistan attacked us on 1 September in the Jammu sector and I never heard back from Mrs. Gandhi on this subject again.)

Between 1 and 6 September, Pakistan Forces made some advance into our territory up to Jaurian. Their intention was to capture Akhnoor along the River Chenab in their first sweep, cut our line of communication from Jammu to Punch, take the city of Jammu and get astride the Jammu-Srinagar highway. In this attempt they failed, thanks to Lt Gen K.S. Katoch, our local Corps Commander.

Having served my country in many upheavals, now that India was, once again, in the middle of a serious situation, I wished to do my bit and therefore wrote the following letter on 6 September 1965 to Lal Bahadur Shastri:

> At this hour of crisis which India faces, I offer my services in any capacity you may think fit... If I am called upon to serve the country, I am prepared to give up all else.

I got back from him the following formal reply to this letter the same day:

> This is just a line to thank you for your letter of 6th September, 1965 and to say that I appreciate your offer.

In order to divert the attention of the enemy from the Jammu and Kashmir theatre, our military High Command launched on 6 and 8 September a two-pronged attack on the Lahore and Sialkot sectors, as also in Rajasthan.

There are three ways in which I can deal with the Indo-Pakistan war from the 6th onwards: to give details of the

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various ups and downs through which India went during its course; to present only the rosy side of it, as many others have already done; or, to make brief references to it and to some of those who were intimately connected with it. For reasons of security, I will omit a detailed description of this war. To look at its bright side only will amount to self-delusion. I will, therefore, adopt the third course, for the present, and postpone a more exhaustive discussion on the subject. All I will say here is that we failed to defeat Pakistan—a smaller Power than us—which we should have done; also, that we survived certain situations through the grace of God. Pakistan, on the other hand, was proved wrong in her assessment that our Army and Air Force would capitulate in the face of their assaults.

India signed a cease-fire agreement with Pakistan after fighting for only 22 days. The question is, why was this done if India was, as she said, about to knock out Pakistan; also, when Shastri had said on 6 September 1965, that India would not go from one cease-fire to another; and whilst addressing the Chief Ministers assembled at the National Defence Council, he said: 'Whatever be the position, we have to stick to our guns'. Shastri and Government should have anticipated that sooner or later the Big Powers would impose their will upon them through the United Nations, put inexorable pressure to stop fighting and hence should have refrained from making statements unnecessarily from which they had to retract later.

A cease-fire is agreed upon by two contestants in a battle when both fail to force a decision. It amounts to a drawn battle or a stalemate and comes to both sides as a relief. The grounds on which they went to war remain unsettled. As Abe Lincoln said: 'Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions are again upon you.'

Publicity of our war effort could have been more realistic.

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When our journalists clamoured to be present in the thick of many battles, they were not allowed to do so on the excuse that either it was too dangerous or that the Army was too busy fighting to conduct them in such situations. This was a pity. Journalists were allowed by other countries to see battles in progress in World War II, in the Korean war and elsewhere. Many lost their lives in the process and thereby set high traditions in their profession. I know many gallant journalists in this country who would willingly risk their lives in quest of news, but none of them was given this opportunity. Though this resulted in no first hand accounts of our battles, our journalists, on the whole, did an excellent job in covering this war, despite working under various handicaps.

Referring to the Communiques issued by India (and Pakistan), the *Statesman's* military observer wrote on 17 September, 'If the claims made by India and Pakistan in (their) successive communiques were added up, it would be found that the Tanks and Air Forces of both India and Pakistan have been destroyed twice over. . . . . '

It is appropriate that I should say something here about the two men in particular who were at the helm of our Air Force and the Army respectively in the Indo-Pakistan war in 1965. Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh, Chief of the Air Staff, has had a brilliant career as a Pilot and as a senior staff officer. He worked like a Trojan throughout this war and never lost heart under situations which at times were grim. The younger pilots drew much inspiration from his courage, professional knowledge and flying skill; and Government much strength from his ability to keep calm under stress, steadfastness, the soundness of his advice and the good example he set in critical situations.

I wish I could say the same about the Army Chief at the time; General J. N. Chaudhuri. I present here certain aspects of his career and personality based on my personal experiences as mentioned elsewhere in this book or known

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to many others in the Army. If in the process an image of Chaudhuri emerges, which is contrary to what the people have been led to believe, it is not because I have any axe to grind—both he and I having retired from military service—but because facts must be stated.

Most of us in this country are ready to condemn or extol an individual without verifying facts. This is because we are a gullible people. For instance, commenting on Chaudhuri's retirement, the *Statesman*—whose military correspondent he was for years—wrote:

> General Chaudhuri is among the best known soldiers of India. The limelight that has been on him specially in recent months after the fight with Pakistan—during which he provided superb leadership to the fighting men—might well be the envy of many.... He had blazed a trail of glory....and became a National hero.

(The *Statesman* also coupled Chaudhuri's[1] name with that of General Thimayya, who was brave, unassuming and charming, as if there could ever be any comparison between these two.)

A halo has been cast around Chaudhuri which is out of all proportion to his real self. He has received considerable publicity for his supposed operational 'prowess' and for his 'brilliant' direction of the September war. There are, however, many in the army and elsewhere who hold different views on the subject.

Chaudhuri has had a lucky record of service and sound academic professional knowledge. He has the reputation

1 Long before he received dazzling publicity during and after the Indo-Pakistan conflict in 1965, a certain journalist wrote on him in 1961 as follows:

'General Chaudhuri...is very cautious of his career and not likely to make a false move between now and the time of his expected appointment (Chief of the Army Staff). He is content to say a quiet and soft-toned 'Jo Hazoor' (Yes, your honour) to any of the high-ups in the capital in whose hand his destiny lies.... Why alienate anyone at the fag end of one's career?'

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among his colleagues in the Army of being an excellent staff officer as also a good office man. He was, however, never known—like Thimayya—as being an outstanding leader of men in the field, facing dangerous situations and risking his life smilingly, in his military career of which we have heard so much in recent months in certain circles. He is self-opinionated, anxious to please his superiors, and has a gift of the gab.

Chaudhuri often talked of his 'considerable' war experience. Actually, he commanded no troops in action as a Colonel, Brigadier or a Major General. He once told me in 1958 that he had seen more war than any other Senior Indian Officer, including Thimayya, and asked me whether I did not agree. 'Where?' I asked doubtfully. Actually he had seen war, mostly as a staff officer and briefly in command of troops.

General J. N. Chaudhuri was described by some during this war as one of the six leading tank experts in the world. This was placing him at par with brilliant men like Field Marshal Rommel, who had won fame in many tank battles. Actually, during this war, Chaudhuri did not direct any tank battle himself. It was his subordinate commanders who fought them *on their own*. Tank battles are directed from battle-fields and not from places like Delhi. In the past, the largest tank formation he commanded was a Division with which he never fought in any battle but only against ill-armed and irregular Razakars in a Police Action in Hyderabad. He had commanded no tank or any other Brigade (at any time) but an armoured regiment during World War II. Though he may know much about the mechanism, structure and some other aspects of a tank, (as so many others also do) the point I am making is that he has not taken part in much of tank warfare. His record, therefore, in no way justifies his being rated as one of the leading tank 'experts' in the world.

In this war he made many errors of judgement. He first

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took certain military steps in Kashmir, the consequences of which he could not correctly foresee. He was not justified in taking some offensives later over far too extensive an area, which prevented him from concentrating sufficient Forces anywhere. He could not, therefore, press home these attacks either in Sindh, Lahore or Sialkot Sectors. He moved a few of his formations to the forward areas far too late—and not sufficiently manned or equipped—for them to be able to influence the battles in time and to our advantage. His 'prize' effort was to have asked one of his senior commanders, whilst the battle of Khem Karan was still in progress, on 9/10 September, to take up an alternative position, several miles in the rear which would have meant giving up some well-known and vital places and areas. (If he had been obeyed, India would have been in a desperate situation. But thanks to Lt Gens Harbaksh Singh and Dhillon's grit, we were saved this plight.) This did not typify determination on the part of an Army Chief nor was it an inspiring attitude. It is also interesting to note that throughout the Indo-Pakistan war, the 're-doubtable' General Chaudhuri did not venture anywhere near a single battle (which many of his counterparts had done in similar circumstances elsewhere in the past to hearten their troops). His photographs, however, appeared in the press showing him standing shoulder to shoulder with our Jawans on the banks of the Ichogil Canal, *but only after the cease-fire.*

A few weeks after the cease-fire, an item appeared in the press that Chaudhuri was being given an extension of service by Government beyond his due age of retirement. The very next day, this news was contradicted by Government. There were also similar feelers in the press—that the Army Chief should be made the Chief of Defence Staff in the rank of Field Marshal. One would like to know the source of such information which turned out to be totally incorrect in the end. These were further instances of our

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tendency to cast halos around individuals without noticing their feet of clay.

In about 5,000 years of recorded human history, there have been nearly 15,000 wars at an average of about three per year. War is an inevitable human phenomenon. Our statesmen should have remembered what Richard Burton once said : 'Peace is the dream of the wise, war is the history of man'. Disregarding this fundamental fact, a wishful feeling had run amongst them since Independence that we would not be involved in a war in the foreseeable future, though since 1962, they should have changed their outlook on this subject.

In view of the foregoing, those who run our military affairs should, by all means, keep striving for peace but must have the Armed Forces always ready for war. Their foremost duty is to acquire essential knowledge of strategy in order to understand the complex machinery of military affairs over which they preside Knowledge—which gives confidence—will make it easier for them to have a firm grip over matters affecting the defence of our country and to see that the strategic theories, which our military experts expound, make sense. They should never adopt an apologetic attitude for direction of a policy and make sure that it is not erroneously characterized as interference by the Forces or anyone else.

The moral is that our statesmen should do a little more than saying as they do at times that they have given freedom of action to our Armed Forces to act when and where they like, an excellent cliche but with various possibilities (and liable to give ideas to the Forces and the public). They should not abdicate the political control of war which, of course, they must conduct under advice of their suitable Service High Commands. They should, instead, burn midnight oil—under the strong and decisive direction of the Prime Minister—in studying the complex machinery

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of war, in conjunction with diplomatic, economic and financial considerations. Whatever else they do to attain the maximum self-sufficiency and strengthen our Forces, our leaders should see that a new spirit is infused in them, giving place to a conventional outlook.

We must make up our mind as to what our long-term relationship is going to be in regard to Nepal, Burma, Thailand, USSR and Afghanistan. Diplomacy should play an important rôle in this endeavour. It would be in our interests to keep our border areas quiet and administer them well.

We should also take into account our sea-frontiers. India is the biggest country which lies between London and Singapore. Moreover, any country in this belt can threaten our trade. We must, therefore, some day, have mastery over the relevant oceans. The Chinese invasion in 1962 gave us ample proof that the great Himalayas are not a deterrent to a powerful invader.

To discharge these responsibilities we must have a strong, modern Armed Force poised suitably—backed up by sound economy—and with powerful friends.

No doubt China had treacherously violated our territory on many occasions and given us sufficient provocation. But we should not have fought against her in 1962 *single-handed,*[2] and until we were fully prepared. We should have —after doing all we could ourselves—sought, in time, the requisite aid and—without strings—from friendly countries also. On this subject Chanakya has said in *Arthasastra* —a work of exceptional interest written between 321-300

2 A tribe of experts—who have never fought against the Chinese nor have they come into contact with their army anywhere and hence know little about it—has emerged in India since 1962 who would have our public believe that the Chinese Army is not as strong as made out to be and that anyone who has a different view is a defeatist! Man to man, the Indian soldier may be second to none. But it does not mean that we should, specially in time of need, apart from strengthening our Army, also not develop strong enough bonds with friendly countries to help us in defeating our powerful foe.

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B.C. : 'When a King finds himself unable to confront his enemy single-handed and when it is necessary that he should march, then he should make the expedition in combination with kings of inferior, equal or superior powers (as necessary).' Even USA and Britain made common cause with USSR in World War II in order to defeat the Germans. Finally, it is no good our rulers saying from time to time that they are surprised by certain situations and complain of being stabbed in the back by China, Pakistan, etc. We should never be caught by surprise by any military (or other) situation. Chanakya said 2,000 years ago that a king who cannot anticipate his enemy's moves and complains that he has been stabbed in the back, should be dethroned.

There must be constant and critical but legitimate comment—apart from adoration—on our defence effort in the press and other forums, as in other democracies, to keep our strategists on their toes. We must also maintain our morale by not only harping on our triumphs but also mentioning our reverses, if any. It is better, in the long run, to be told the truth—so that we may learn by our mistakes—than to be kept in the dark regarding certain unpalatable facts.

We are far from the end of our troubles yet and should counsel ourselves not to live in a world of slogans. We should, of course, never belittle our efforts though resist the temptation of indulging in undue self praise. We should prepare ourselves for all eventualities with a realistic and purposeful attitude. And, if at all possible, we should not let Pakistan or anyone else take the initiative against us on the next occasion, but take the first step ourselves instead, once we are faced with provoking circumstances.

The morale of a fighting soldier, and therefore of an Armed Force, stems from four things: A worthy cause to fight for and a faith in his political and military leaders; good training; and up-to-date and sufficient equipment and

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logistics. Given these, the Forces will do the rest. It is the duty of our statesmen, in the name of our country, to guarantee this state of affairs.

When I resigned from my assignment with Teja towards the end of 1965, I knew that I (and my wife) would have to face a hard life again. The psychological aspect of being on the road and the discomfort of folding up a house—once at the end of every year—as happened to be the case—since 1962 to date did not offer a bright prospect. My only source of income would now be my pension; I had no house of my own anywhere. If I fell ill again, I would find it difficult to afford good medical attention. I would have to deny myself many other conveniences. The life in the Ashram where I was going once again was not an easy one. My elder daughter was still with me as her husband was serving in the Air Force as a Fighter Pilot on the Indo-Pakistan border. But now that I was more reconciled with life, with the passage of time, and also wanted to devote my full attention to the writing of this book, I thought it was better to be on my own, whatever the difficulties. I, therefore, vacated my comfortable apartment in Jor Bagh in December 1965 and carted my belongings, helter-skelter, as I had done in 1963, when I gave up my military career and moved to the Geeta Ashram, Delhi Cantonment, amidst its chimes, which had a soothing effect on my harassed self.

Here I was, ringing in the New Year of 1966, starting, as it were, from scratch once again. Fate was squaring its accounts with me without respite. My book, which I had been trying to write since 1963, was in a quandry. Life was lonely again but friends like Raghbans, Khanna, Ujjal and Gyani kept seeing us constantly.

On 11 January, in the small hours of the morning, my wife woke me up to say she had just been told that Prime Minister Shastri had died of heart failure at Tashkent

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a few hours ago. I rushed out of my bed and switched on my wireless set. Continuous news bulletins were being broadcast and a day of great sorrow and depression dawned. As Shastri's body was due to land at Palam (near Delhi) at 2·30 P.M. that day, and then taken to New Delhi, my wife, daughter and I stood, stampeded by crowds, along the road near the Polo ground in the Cantonment to catch its glimpse. Major Walia of the Guards identified us in the multitude and courteously led us to the seclusion of his unit lines nearby from where we had a grand-stand view of Shastri's body passing through.

Shastri's death was mourned throughout the country. This simple but sagacious man had been our Prime Minister for only a short time during which some important events took place in the country. The Tashkent Agreement which he signed just before his death, presumably under pressure, had a mixed reception in India. If Shastri had only resisted Kosygin's pressure—knowing that in the light of our experience with Pakistan since 1948, the latter was bound to violate our borders whenever she found it expedient and that no argument with her was of any avail—and if he had declined to accept those terms of the Tashkent declaration which were to the detriment of India, the Russians could really have done nothing about this matter, in practice, except to express their displeasure, which, in diplomacy, hurts no one and can only be of a temporary nature. The Security Council would have also reconciled themselves to this situation. On return to India, Shastri should have explained to his countrymen that he had merely interpreted their wishes at Tashkent and not budged from the pledges he had made with them and that they must now gird up their loins and be prepared for the consequences of such a posture which he had adopted at their instance (or they at his?). He could have then sought a mandate from his people and acted accordingly.

Referring to Shastri's sad demise, J. B. Kripalani said in

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the Lok Sabha on 17 February 1966:

> I think many pressures (at Tashkent) created in Shastri a tension which made him forget his promise to his people that there would be no withdrawals without guarantees. Shastri signed the declaration to get rid of this tension. The signing of the declaration did cause a temporary feeling of relaxation and exuberance.... This feeling had passed when Shastri finally retired to bed (on 10 January). He had realized that he had not acted according to his promises to the people. It was this realization that had brought about his tragic heart attack (and death).

The Tashkent declaration undoubtedly had some advantages but it did not alter the basic and complex situation. Whereas USSR are keen to retain India's friendship, they are also anxious to befriend Pakistan and if possible, wean it away from USA or China, to some extent at least. If India is important to USSR, USA and UK, from many points of view, these countries are also aware of Pakistan's strategic value, as is China. All of them would, therefore, like to have as much influence in Pakistan as possible. In case of war between India and Pakistan, these countries except China would exert the maximum pressure to bear on them to come to some terms as they fear their own involvement in it for many reasons. They are anxious, though they now do not say so openly, that one of the causes of trouble between India and Pakistan—Kashmir—should be removed and there should be some settlement. They do not know that even if there was settlement on Kashmir, Pakistan would find some other excuse for a rift with India. When, therefore, people preach sermons of peace to us, they do not remember that whilst we have tried to live peacefully with Pakistan for eighteen years, she, on the other hand, has not reciprocated. In fact, she has invaded our territory three times during this period; in Kashmir in 1947, in Kutch in early 1965, and again in Kashmir later that year. As she continues to display venomous and unrelenting hostility towards India, we may be driven one day to

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follow Bharavi's advice to the King, in his Sanskrit work *Kiratarjuniya :* 'O King, abandon thy passivity and rekindle thine own flame for the destruction of the enemy. It is the hermits who have no desires, who conquer their enemies and attain their ends through love.... This is not the way of Kings....'

Before the country realized the full implications of the Tashkent agreement and got over the shock of Shastri's death, the question of the latter's successor—as had happened after Nehru's death—loomed large in front of the nation. An intense and unscrupulous struggle was feared in the battle of succession. Many candidates were in the running but none was certain to win. Ultimately, after a bitter contest with Morarji Desai, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, as she was the most acceptable candidate, was elected with a big majority.

Indira Gandhi was now presiding over an India which might have moved forward in many directions since Independence, but which has not done so well in many other respects, specially in the economic field. For instance, our population is running ahead of our capacity to provide sufficient food, shelter and employment for our people. It also militates against an increase in our per capita income. Our foreign debt now stands at over Rs 4,500 crores. Our status in the comity of nations is not what it was a few years ago. This state of affairs was partly due to circumstances beyond our control, but also due to our own weaknesses, e.g. apathy, incompetence and dishonesty in running our affairs, indiscipline in many fields, hypocrisy in our behaviour and the tendency to sermonize and live in a world of make-believe and self-deception.

Indira Gandhi and her Party associates probably know that the main quality in our leaders should be courage—the manliest of all virtues—which, according to Ernest Hemingway, is 'grace under pressure.' If therefore our house is not put in order soon with bold, determined and

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decisive leadership, accepting collective responsibility, chaos will appear on the scene and some ambitious groups, perhaps with the connivance of interested parties, may exploit the situation. I hope that she takes steps which, apart from co-ordinating our endeavours in the fields of Economy, Diplomacy and Defence, discourage our leaders from adopting superficial[3] postures as also help to build up our character. Only then will India have both peace and prosperity.

I met Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed—the erstwhile Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir—at a wedding in Delhi sometime in March 1966, after three years. As he had gone through a political crisis and prolonged illness, since I had met him last, he now looked, physically, a shadow of his former self. But his eyes still shone and his spirit was very much alive.

Bakshi rendered invaluable service to India in the process of integration of the J and K State with the rest of the Indian Union. He delivered the goods during critical situations and is a firm believer in the oneness of the Indian Union. He, therefore, gave no quarter to any pro-Pakistani or other anti-national elements and dealt with them more effectively than anyone in the past or since. Bakshi set an example of leadership, courage and initiative and faced hazards repeatedly in various operational and other situations in Jammu and Kashmir during the 1947-48 war and after. He organized the local population into a disciplined body. He licked the local administration into some sort of

3 For example, on the one hand we emphasize the great strides we have made in the field of Defence during the last four years and say we are now fully prepared to meet any threats to our border; on the other hand, when the Chinese violated Bhutan's (which amount to our) borders, vide Press reports published on 4 October 1966, all we did was to make a written protest to the Chinese. The point I am making is that if we are not ready for an emergency, we should prepare for it and not merely keep making statements; and even if we are fully prepared. we should not declare our strength in advance but prove it when the time comes.

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shape after 1948, which was no easy matter. He knew the Jammu and Kashmir terrain or the political conditions in the State better than most.

Many of our important political leaders, ministers and high officials condemn Bakshi now; yet these gentlemen never uttered a word against him for years on end when he was in the chair. They accepted Bakshi's alleged acts in Kashmir then, without raising a voice. They cannot say that they did not, generally, know then what they know now about Bakshi. Does their conscience, therefore, not prick when they disapprove of Bakshi now that he is out of power? It is this weakness in the make-up of our character which we must exorcize.

In April 1966 a newspaper with a Jammu dateline said that the Kashmir Government led by Sadiq was reported to have informally suggested to the Centre that I should be appointed Governor of Jammu and Kashmir to succeed Dr. Karan Singh. This speculation possibly reminded some people, who had previously shown 'interest' in me, that I still existed.

In August, my name was mentioned in the Parliament once again, this time in connection with what was known as the 'Teja Affair'. Some Members of the Opposition said things about me on the floor of the House, during the Jayanti Shipping debate, which were not based on facts [4] I then sent the following letter to various editors of newspapers all over India, which many of them published during September 1966:

Some Members of our Parliament have, from time to time, but especially in the last two weeks or so during the course of the debate on the Jayanti Shipping Company, which was reported in the Press throughout India, made statements about me which are not based on

4 Only one courageous Congress Member, Arjun Arora, stood up in my defence stoutly. He began by saying that I was a much maligned and misunderstood man and defended me with verve on specific points.

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facts. I would appreciate if these gentlemen are good enough to repeat the same, not under the shelter of Parliamentary immunity, but outside, publicly, so that the correctness or otherwise of their statements can be tested judicially.

No member of the Parliament has, however, taken any action on this letter to this day.

I have already explained how I became associated with Teja as his Senior Adviser in 1963. It has since been whispered here and there that Teja gave me an assignment to please Nehru or at the latter's instance. This whispering campaign was possibly based on the fact that many persons in India (even today) try to curry favour with powers-that-be in this way. I could, of course, not read Teja's mind on this subject, nor did he ever give me any such inkling. As regards Teja having given me an appointment at the instance of Nehru, those who have worked with the latter closely will bear out that Nehru never 'fixed' jobs for anyone.

It was thought in some quarters that Government should not have allowed me to accept a salary of Rs 8,000 per month, ('free' of income tax!) in the private sector when *my* conduct or responsibility in the NEFA operations was under investigation and that, nor should I, in these circumstances, have been permitted to go abroad. Firstly, my conduct was *never* under any investigation. Further, the authorities knew from the NEFA enquiry which had concluded its deliberations before I left India, that though this investigating body had found many reasons for our disasters in NEFA (and Ladakh), it had singled out no General as being responsible for these reverses.

As for my salary, it is widely accepted that remunerations in the private sector are much higher than in the Government services. And, as I have said earlier, there were many other senior civil or military Government officials who had received in the past, or are receiving even today, not less and in many cases higher salaries than Teja gave me. On this

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subject Sanjeeva Reddy, our Transport Minister, said on the floor of the house, during the debate on 'Jayanti affairs' that it was unfortunate other names, including that of General Kaul, had been brought in. Talking of salaries, he said there had been cases of Government officials drawing about Rs 4,000 at the time of retirement having been re-employed in the private sector at (say) Rs. 10,000 per month. He also said General Kaul's was *not* the solitary case. Moreover, my salary was *not income tax free*. This is a canard which has been repeated more than once in spite of Chavan's statement in the parliament as stated earlier. In fact, I have already paid, since 1963, a total of about one lakh and twenty thousand rupees as income tax either directly to the appropriate Government authorities, voluntarily, on return from abroad or, in deductions made by Teja, at the source, from my salary. I hold receipts for these payments.

Some people have wondered what exactly was the nature of my duties with Teja. I will briefly describe them here. In Japan, between June and November 1963, I was advising Teja about the procurement of machinery and plant from certain concerns in that country for the thermal power station at Ramagundam, near Hyderabad. I also visited shipyards in Nagasaki, Kure and elsewhere, on behalf of Teja, and later advised him, from the organizational aspect, whether he could have ships for the Jayanti Shipping Company built in some of these yards.

Whilst in U.S.A. in 1964, Teja sought my advice about the procurement of engineering assistance and machinery for some of his projects in India. I discussed, also in USA, the various organizational implications of his scheme of dredging the River Hooghly—which never materialized—with some American shipping experts. He called me to Finland once to discuss with him the organizational aspects of setting up a paper mill in India. I went to Europe and to London, on his behalf, to explore the possibility of Jayanti

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ships being chartered out to various parties.

Teja also sought advice from me in detail, specially when I was back in India in 1964, about the various aspects of the Ramagundam thermal project. I made, and gave him, an assessment of the problem (and priority of tasks) on the following points concerning this project:

(a) Schedule of the despatch from abroad, and receipt in India, of machinery and plant, their onward despatch from ports of disembarkation to the railhead, and then on to the site;
(b) Co-ordination of technical and non-technical man-power;
(c) Procurement of building material, specially of critical items such as steel and cement and some others like bricks and joinery;
(d) Construction of essential accommodation for personnel and materials (to protect the latter from being damaged due to vagaries of weather);
(e) Preparation of lists of different types of vehicles required in this project;
(f) Establishment of a repair and maintenance organization for vehicles;
(g) Organization of the speedy movement of all materials through various railway bottle-necks, up to the site;
(h) Installation of services e.g. electricity, roads, water and drainage;
(i) Planning for liaison, publicity and welfare organizations, etc.

I gave Teja advice about some aspects of the Republic Forge Company, located also in Hyderabad, after studying several Forging plants in Calcutta and going through the details of many others elsewhere. In addition, he asked me to help him to finalize the raising of a loan of about rupees one crore, for the flotation of the Republic Forge Company, from various financial organizations in India, such as the Reserve Bank, the Industrial Finance Corporation and the Life Insurance Corporation. I did what I could in the matter, in consultation with the top officials of these organizations.

I resigned my assignment with Teja, of my own accord, for the reasons stated earlier, towards the end of 1965.

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At this time, I had no knowledge of the prevailing state of affairs in the Jayanti Shipping Company as I was only advising Teja—when asked—and not running any of his concerns, nor was I in a position to anticipate the coming events.

It has been asked by some, why I did not give evidence before what was known as the Sukhtankar Committee which enquired into the affairs of Jayanti Shipping Company (in 1966), of which Teja was the Chairman. As a matter of fact, this Committee did not consider it necessary to call any witnesses. Nor did I have any knowledge about the management of the Jayanti Shipping Company, which was under investigation.

Teja enjoyed the confidence of many high dignitaries in the country including Nehru, Morarji Desai and S. K. Patil. He also had cordial relations till as late as 1965, with Cabinet, Chief and other State Ministers, Ambassadors, Secretaries to Government, prominent politicians belonging to different parties and others. A number of them have lived with Teja as his guests abroad, and have enjoyed his hospitality in various forms.

In view of certain insinuations which have been made against me, I state categorically that I never indulged in any activity whilst working with Teja, or anywhere else, for that matter, which was other than legitimate. Nor did I ever receive any payments from Teja or anyone else at any time except for my salary or my dues for legitimate expenses. I should also add, in fairness, that at no time did Teja ask me to do anything which can be considered improper or wrong, judged from any standard.

During my career and even after retirement from service, as stated already, I have aroused the ire of many individuals who, through vicious propaganda, have dragged my name into various controversies. It is now for the reader to judge where the truth lies.

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The Epilogue

With all the hopes of future years

LONGFELLOW

I find India on the edge of a precipice today but do hope that things take a turn for the better and what Kipling said about his country applies to us also: 'Who dies if Britain lives' (or who lives if Britain dies?) In the meantime, I can only counsel myself, as Francis Quarles said :

> My soul, sit thou a patient looker on;
> Judge not the play before the play is done;
> Her (Fate's) plot hath many changes; every day
> Speaks a new scene; the last act crowns the play.

This brings me to the end of my story.

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